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# Stoneleigh as a Case Study in Architectural and Land Preservation

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# Stoneleigh as a Case Study in Architectural and Land Preservation

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Stoneleigh, a recently preserved historic landscape garden and Tudor Revival House in Lower Merion Township, Pennsylvania. An eminent domain legal challenge threatened the permanent protection of this estate, which was set through Façade and Conservation Easements. John and Chara Haas, Stoneleigh's last private owners recognized the property's naturalistic values and created a Conservation Easement for the property with Natural Lands. Natural Lands, a region-wide land trust serving Southern New Jersey and Southeastern Pennsylvania, owns Stoneleigh. This land trust created a facade easement for Stoneleigh's grand house. The Lower Merion Conservancy and the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia monitor the estate's easements. In May of 2018, Natural Lands planned to open Stoneleigh as a public garden, the Lower Merion School Board instigated a potential taking through eminent domain. This threat to the estate's preservation spurred support of the property from around the region. Stoneleigh's value lies in its role as a historic site and preserved open space in a densely populated suburban community.

The thesis argues that Stoneleigh's case provides connections between historic and land preservation organizations, and closer collaboration between these organizations will be critical in the future. Both of these organizations have similar goals, aiming to protect historic resources and everyday locations. With added development pressures, preservationists on local and state levels will need to strengthen current laws for protecting historic properties. Greater collaboration between historic and land preservation groups protecting both natural and cultural resources have the potential of strengthening laws for preserving historic places.

## **Keywords**

conservation easement, facade easement, Lower Merion Conservancy, Natural Lands, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

## **Disciplines**

Historic Preservation and Conservation

## **Comments**

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STONELEIGH AS A CASE STUDY IN ARCHITECTURAL AND LAND  
PRESERVATION

Anne Katherine Albert

A THESIS  
in  
Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Professor

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## Table Of Contents

❖ Acknowledgements	Page ii
❖ List of Figures	Page iv
❖ Introduction	Page 1
❖ History of Stoneleigh	Page 7
❖ Landscape History	Page 24
❖ Stoneleigh Today	Page 32
❖ Protection of Stoneleigh	Page 45
❖ Recent Improvements To Stoneleigh	Page 53
❖ Eminent Domain Problem	Page 56
❖ Case Study For Eminent Domain Problem	Page 69
❖ Interpretive Themes	Page 74
❖ Idea Of Cultural Landscapes	Page 93
❖ Best Practices	Page 98
❖ Comparable Site	Page 109
❖ Conclusion	Page 113
❖ Sources For Figures	Page 115
❖ Bibliography	Page 121
❖ Index	Page 129

## List Of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad Map	Page 8
<b>Figure 2:</b> Edmund Smith's Stoneleigh House	Page 11
<b>Figure 3:</b> Samuel Bodine's Stoneleigh House	Page 12
<b>Figure 4:</b> <i>Atlas of Bryn Mawr and Vicinity</i> Map From 1881	Page 16
<b>Figure 5:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties along the Pennsylvania Railroad</i> Map From 1887	Page 17
<b>Figure 6:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties along the Pennsylvania Railroad</i> , Map From 1887: Zoomed in map	Page 17
<b>Figure 7:</b> <i>Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County</i> , Map From 1896	Page 18
<b>Figure 8:</b> <i>Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County</i> , Map From 1896: Zoomed in map	Page 18
<b>Figure 9:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad</i> , Map From 1908	Page 19
<b>Figure 10:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad</i> , Map From 1908: Zoomed in map	Page 19
<b>Figure 11:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad</i> , Map From 1913	Page 20
<b>Figure 12:</b> <i>Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad</i> , Map From 1913: Zoomed in map	Page 20
<b>Figure 13:</b> <i>Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania</i> , Map From 1937	Page 21
<b>Figure 14:</b> <i>Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania</i> , Map From 1937: Zoomed in map	Page 21
<b>Figure 15:</b> <i>Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania</i> , Map From 1948	Page 22
<b>Figure 16:</b> <i>Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania</i> , Map From 1948	Page 22
<b>Figure 17:</b> <i>Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania</i> , Map From 1961	Page 23
<b>Figure 18:</b> Formal Hedged Path, Circa 1901	Page 28

<b>Figure 19:</b> Hedged Forecourt, Circa 1901	Page 28
<b>Figure 20:</b> Circle Garden, Circa 1908	Page 29
<b>Figure 21:</b> Circle Garden, Circa 1908: [Zoomed out view]	Page 29
<b>Figure 22:</b> 1909 Plan For Stoneleigh, by the Olmsted Brothers	Page 30
<b>Figure 23:</b> Rockery Garden Room, Circa 1920	Page 30
<b>Figure 24-</b> Circle Garden, 1920	Page 31
<b>Figure 25-</b> Circle Garden, 1958	Page 31
<b>Figures 26 and 27</b> Historic trees along the northwest part of Stoneleigh's property	Page 34
<b>Figure 28-</b> Great Lawn with Stoneleigh's west facade	Page 35
<b>Figure 29-</b> Stoneleigh's east facade, from the meadow	Page 35
<b>Figure 30-</b> Stoneleigh's meadow	Page 36
<b>Figure 31-</b> Flowering tree, along curved driveway to the Carriage House	Page 36
<b>Figure 32-</b> Stoneleigh Carriage House with stone wall in front	Page 37
<b>Figure 33-</b> Stoneleigh Carriage House	Page 37
<b>Figure 34-</b> East facade of the Stoneleigh Carriage House	Page 38
<b>Figure 35-</b> Extant Greenhouse	Page 38
<b>Figure 36-</b> Arbor in Rockery Garden, looking west	Page 39
<b>Figure 37-</b> Arbor in Rockery Garden, looking east	Page 39
<b>Figure 38-</b> Rockery Garden, looking south	Page 40
<b>Figure 39-</b> Rockery Garden, looking north	Page 40
<b>Figure 40-</b> Circle Garden, looking north	Page 41
<b>Figure 41-</b> Panorama of Circle Garden	Page 41
<b>Figure 42-</b> Pergola	Page 42
<b>Figure 43-</b> Looking north through pergola	Page 42
<b>Figure 44-</b> Gate in west end of pergola	Page 43
<b>Figure 45-</b> Flowering Trees with large planter	Page 43

<b>Figure 46-</b> Lychgate along northwest part of property	Page 44
<b>Figure 47-</b> Bay window with decorative carvings on Stoneleigh's south wing	Page 51
<b>Figure 48-</b> Bay window with decorative carvings on Stoneleigh's northeast wing	Page 52
<b>Figure 49-</b> Example of an historic lychgate at the Church of St. Margaret, Great Britain	Page 56
<b>Figure 50-</b> Stoneleigh Hare Statue with "Save Stoneleigh" sign	Page 67
<b>Figure 51-</b> "Save Stoneleigh" sign	Page 68
<b>Figure 52-</b> Stoneleigh's Conservation Plan	Page 68
<b>Figure 53-</b> Stoneleigh's west façade, showing finials atop the gables	Page 85
<b>Figure 54-</b> Large chimney with finial on Stoneleigh's northwest bay	Page 86
<b>Figure 55-</b> Stoneleigh's east façade with front entrance	Page 86
<b>Figure 56-</b> Stoneleigh's front entrance	Page 87
<b>Figure 57-</b> One of Stoneleigh's casement windows	Page 87
<b>Figure 58-</b> Arch with pilasters inside Stoneleigh's front door	Page 88
<b>Figure 59-</b> Arch to the right of Stoneleigh's front door	Page 89
<b>Figure 60-</b> Arch to the left of Stoneleigh's front door	Page 89
<b>Figure 61-</b> Stone fireplace in Stoneleigh's small sitting room	Page 90
<b>Figure 62-</b> Stone fireplace on the east wall of Stoneleigh's central room	Page 90
<b>Figure 63-</b> Stone fireplace on the southwest wall of Stoneleigh's central room	Page 91
<b>Figure 64-</b> Decorative ceiling in Stoneleigh's central room	Page 91
<b>Figure 65-</b> Marble fireplace in Stoneleigh's dining room	Page 92
<b>Figure 66-</b> Tudor Revival cast bronze scone along the oak paneled wall in Stoneleigh's central room	Page 92
<b>Figure 67-</b> Map of Stoneleigh	Page 99
<b>Figure 68-</b> Ladew Topiary Gardens	Page 112
<b>Figure 69-</b> Ladew Topiary Gardens, looking toward the house	Page 112

## Introduction

In the United States, land preservation and historic preservation organizations often operate separately but share similar goals and values. This thesis argues for the importance of combining historic and land preservation tools, perspectives, and practices as a way of bolstering preservation and conservation of cultural and natural resources in American Heritage Management practice. Stoneleigh, an historic estate in Villanova in Lower Merion Township, Pennsylvania, serves as a case study. The local and regional controversy surrounding Stoneleigh's protected status, its history and possible future applications are each evaluated. This property is situated on the Main Line, west of Philadelphia.

Stoneleigh's forty-two acres were designated as a protected, public garden in May 2018, at which time the Lower Merion School Board instigated a potential eminent domain battle over Stoneleigh's status. One section, the Frank Miles Day Garden complex, which includes two parcels once part of Stoneleigh, remain at risk. Stoneleigh is a well-loved asset to the Lower Merion Township, and the region. Both land preservation and historic preservation organizations are independently managed but consciously aim to protect types of historic resources. Stoneleigh is historically significant because several well-known landscape architects, including the Olmsted Brothers, significant local architects, and its influential owners all impacted its design and history. Stoneleigh's

layered past, appreciated by preservationists, and its open space, valued by land conservationists, are not far apart in their alignment. If those two agendas could combine forces, perhaps preservation hurdles like Stoneleigh's will be less frequently encountered in the future. Stoneleigh's partially endangered status, historic and natural values provide example of the need for a balance between historic and land preservation.

In recognition of Stoneleigh's distinguished historical, cultural, architectural, natural, and landscape values, several organizations monitor the easements and maintain and operate the estate today. Natural Lands, a large land trust which operates throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey, owns Stoneleigh. Administering both the mansion and landscape grounds as public attractions creates a new interpretive challenge for Natural Lands. The organization protects open space in perpetuity in an effort to save scenic and undeveloped areas for future generations. Natural Lands does care for and maintain historic buildings in some instances, but rarely are those structures operated as public historic sites. The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia functions as a second party with an interest in the estate because it serves as the grantee for Stoneleigh's Facade Easement. This document provides protection for the exterior features of the Stoneleigh mansion. The Lower Merion Conservancy holds Stoneleigh's Conservation Easement, which was first administered by Natural Lands. Conservation easements preserve and protect

natural or scenic areas from future disturbances or destruction. The Lower Merion Conservancy unusually values both land and historic resources in its practice. Its mission states, “The Lower Merion Conservancy protects and enhances our community’s character and quality of life, recognizing that the sustainable management of our environmental and historic resources is inextricably intertwined with both conservation and change.”<sup>1</sup> This powerful perspective allows preservationists and planners to evaluate the whole community, not just a small piece. Each of these organizations will guide Stoneleigh’s future with additional planning, maintenance, and interpretation.

Stoneleigh as a case study underscores the need for a balance in historic and land preservation. The following sections of this thesis will offer a Literature review related to understanding Stoneleigh, through cultural landscapes in addition to land and historic preservation practice. Next the thesis conveys Stoneleigh’s history, analyzes and describes its house and landscape, and will evaluate its protections and preservation hurdles. The paper will also describe another recent eminent domain case in central Pennsylvania, and interpretive themes for Stoneleigh that help to contextualize the site for its growing visiting public. The last section focuses on best practices which considers additional

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<sup>1</sup> “Mission and History,” Lower Merion Conservancy, last modified 2014, <http://lmconservancy.org/mission-history/>

ways of thinking about both land and historic preservation, while thinking about the future of historic sites.

➤ **Literature Review**

Few pieces of literature connect both historic and land preservation practices. Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick's edited work, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* clearly defines types of landscapes, historic areas and describes how these ideas relate to historic preservation. The introduction, "Considering Nature And Culture In Historic Landscape Preservation" edited by Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick (2000) and the chapter "Integrity As A Value in Cultural Landscape Preservation" by Catherine Howett directly relate to this topic. William Murtagh's *Keeping Time The History And Theory Of Preservation In America* (1997) conveys a clear history of historic preservation with specific sections on historic house museums, government involvement and the creation of local preservation organizations. He briefly delves into the idea of thinking about historic and land preservation together. Michele Cloonan's *The Monumental Challenge of Preservation*, seeks to uncover how preservation is practiced globally, best solutions for damaged areas, and environmental links to preservation. Each of these authors thinks critically about how their beliefs and ideas have the potential to integrate both historic and land preservation practices.



In the introduction to *Preserving Cultural Landscapes In America*, the authors convey how cultural landscape concepts could directly link with historic buildings. Alanen and Melnick describe, “The very concept of cultural landscape preservation may sound like an oxymoron to some people, because cultural landscapes are composed of natural elements that grow, mature, erode and die... Since it is not possible to enforce stability in landscapes, ‘they never arrive at the point of total preservation.’”<sup>2</sup> Since landscapes and the natural environment are always changing it is difficult to identify an ‘original’ appearance, only ongoing features and forms. Landscapes can be maintained and monitored but their closest historic appearance will often come from documented drawings or photographs. The authors continue, “Buildings-especially their siting, arrangement, and organization are important features of the cultural landscape although landscape preservationists typically do not emphasize the structural systems, surface finishes, floor plans, and interior furnishings characteristic of traditional preservation efforts.”<sup>3</sup> This passage situates buildings directly within landscapes, while not describing each of their characteristics, and is an example of buildings as physical structures in the landscape. The passage does not offer significance or interpretation for the buildings. The introduction creates a framework for Alanen and Melnick’s ideas of cultural landscapes.

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, ed., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Alanen and Melnick, ed., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, 3-4.

In “Considering Nature And Culture In Historic Landscape Preservation,” Robert Melnick attempts to link ideas of historic and landscape preservation. He explains, “In the world of historic preservation, a robust and dynamic landscape cannot be thought of as simply a historical resource or only a natural system. Thus, a landscape valued for both its natural and cultural identity can be either a point of contention or an opportunity for collaboration and cooperation.”<sup>4</sup> Melnick sees buildings and landscapes creating an active network with multiple layers and room for interpretation. This dual combination allows for buildings to work with surrounding landscapes. Melnick’s ideas support landscapes and buildings in complementing each other, and not as separate actors.

Michele Cloonan’s *The Monumental Challenge of Preservation*, defines significant terms which overlap in both historic and land preservation practices. The confusion of these terms relates to the many similarities of the two fields even though they are executed separately. The National Park Service articulates “Conservation is generally associated with the protection of natural resources, while preservation is associated with the protection of buildings, objects and landscapes.”<sup>5</sup> From this definition, it appears that the words preservation and conservation are easily interchanged. In historic preservation practices, these

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Melnick, “Considering Nature and Culture in Historic Landscape Preservation,” in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, ed. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>5</sup> Michele Valerie Cloonan, *The Monumental Challenge of Preservation: the Past in A Volatile World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), 167.

terms have more distinct meanings. Conservation references imply fixing of historic materials, while preservation is the policy work for the protection of historic buildings, and physical building maintenance. Both historic and land preservation practices seek to protect and maintain areas with historic resources in addition to natural and cultural significance.

In the United States, land and historic preservation organizations operate very separately. This thesis plans to understand how these separate fields, but related entities could align more closely around shared goals. Stoneleigh presents a significant case study for this topic since the estate is maintained and monitored by land and historic preservation entities. Applicable literature on cultural landscapes, sustainability of historic sites, and preservation challenges will inform the paper's conclusions. Although Stoneleigh has specific legal protection in place, the property was under threat for a new school last year. This study focuses on the significance of open space within built-up areas, in addition to Stoneleigh's specific historic resources.

### **History Of Stoneleigh**

Stoneleigh was among numerous large mansions built in the late nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century as a result of development along the Pennsylvania Railroad, and from wealth gained through the railroad. This area became known as the "Main Line" after the railroad brought new

fortune and many new towns were created.<sup>6</sup> Stoneleigh remains a prime example of a Main Line elite estate with intact buildings and designed grounds. Stoneleigh's first owner worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and chose the property for its proximity to the railroad. As the Railroad expanded the tracks westward from Philadelphia, it purchased farms between Rosemont and Haverford in an effort to maintain large properties near the railroad.<sup>7</sup> The Main Line grew from an isolated rural enclave to a prominent commercial and residential getaway.

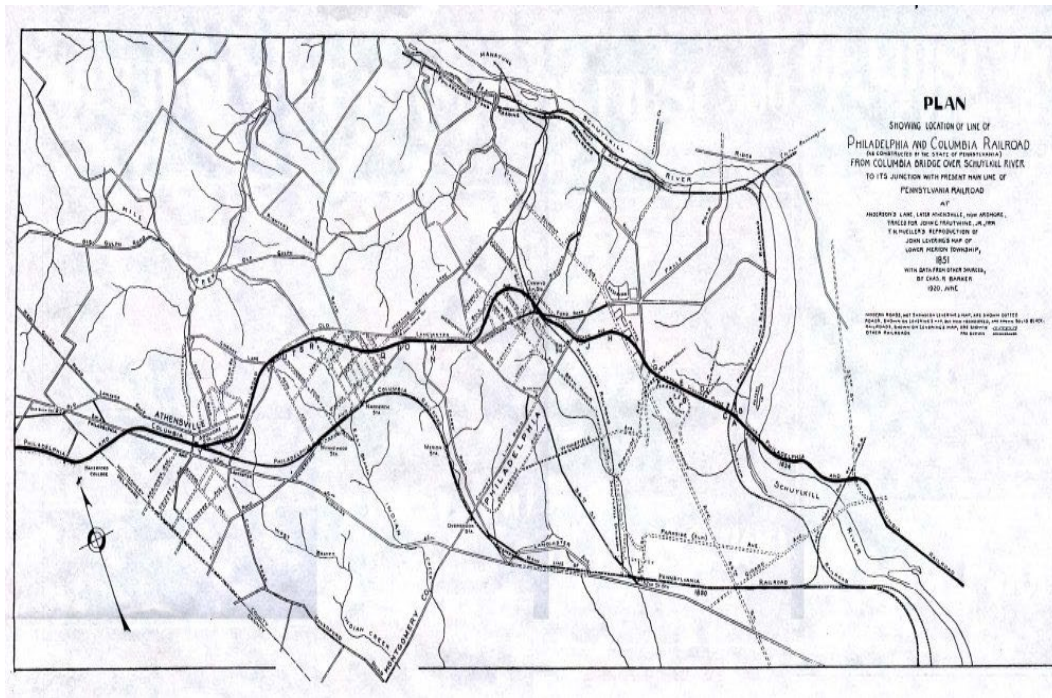


Figure 1- Map showing part of the Main Line section of the Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad, which became the Pennsylvania Railroad. (Lower Merion Historical Society).

<sup>6</sup> Kathy O'Loughlin, "Railroad Barons and Their Main Line Mansions," *Main Line Times*, August 18, 2013. [http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/mainlinetimes/life/railroad-barons-and-their-main-line-mansions/article\\_22b22add-d588-5b54-ab02-da277d9ae5ec.html](http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/mainlinetimes/life/railroad-barons-and-their-main-line-mansions/article_22b22add-d588-5b54-ab02-da277d9ae5ec.html).

<sup>7</sup> O'Loughlin, "Railroad Barons And Their Main Line Mansions."

In 1877, Edmund Smith, Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad designed his country estate on the property, later called Stoneleigh. Smith commissioned the Wilson Brothers to design Stoneleigh in 1878, in the Renaissance-Revival Style (Figure 2).<sup>8</sup> Hopkins' atlas from 1881, indicates that the property had two stone buildings, a wooden barn, four small wooden structures, and two wooden cottages (Figure 4). This map also indicates a driveway which extends from County Line Road to Montgomery Avenue, and the main driveway meets the intersection of County Line Road and Spring Mill Road. Baist's atlas from 1887 identifies a stone house, stone cottage, stone carriage house, stone barn, and six other wooden structures (Figures 5-6). Kiser and Potts' 1896 atlas is more detailed including, a stone house, stone carriage house with symmetrical wooden greenhouses, stone barn, five other wooden structures, three brick structures, and a stone cottage (Figures 7-8). Unlike other wealthy businessmen, who only lived along the Main Line during the summer, Smith desired the suburban lifestyle of a year-round residence and property with naturalistic qualities. Smith hired landscape designer, Charles Miller to design landscape features and greenhouses for the property.<sup>9</sup> Stoneleigh became a large

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<sup>8</sup> William Morrison, *The Main Line: Country Houses of Philadelphia's Storied Suburb, 1870-1930* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2002), 20. Also see: John M. Groff, "Country Houses of the Main Line 1870 - 1930" *Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society History Quarterly* 33, no. 1. (January 1995): 22, <https://tehistory.org/hqda/html/v33/v33n1p017.html>

<sup>9</sup> Christine & Gerald Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment for Stoneleigh Villanova, Pennsylvania*. (Syracuse NY: Doell & Doell Garden Historians & Landscape Preservation Planners, 1993), 3.

manor home and served as Smith's residence for twenty-four years. Stoneleigh's significance as a historic site and public garden is in part due to Edmund Smith's original vision for the estate.

Each of Stoneleigh's owners had a strong appreciation for nature and desired to create a beautiful landscape. After Smith's death, Samuel Bodine acquired Stoneleigh in 1901 as an escape from the crowded city of Philadelphia. Bodine is known for his career with the United Gas & Improvement Company, where he served as secretary, treasurer and later general manager.<sup>10</sup> Bodine also served as manager of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania, and director of the Franklin National Bank.<sup>11</sup> From 1901 to 1902, Bodine rebuilt the Stoneleigh mansion, in the Tudor-Revival style, with the expertise of architects Guy King, and Everett & Mead (Figure 3).<sup>12</sup> Kiser's atlas from 1908, portrays some of Bodine's landscape designs, a garden complex, and a new formal driveway off of Spring Mill Road (Figures 9-10). This map identifies a stone house, stone carriage house, stone cottage, and a garden complex with brick and wooden features. Along with Bodine's extensive changes to the mansion, he greatly added to the landscaped gardens at Stoneleigh, creating a pleasurable oasis. Bodine hired Frank Miles Day, Pentecost & Vitale,

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<sup>10</sup> John W. Jordan, ed. *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania: Genealogical and Personal Memoirs*. Volume 1. (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2004), 1327.

<sup>11</sup> Jordan, ed. *Colonial and Revolutionary Families Of Pennsylvania*, 1327.

<sup>12</sup> Morrison, *The Main Line: Country Houses of Philadelphia's Storied Suburb*, 20. Also see: Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 4.

and later the Olmsted Brothers to make improvements for Stoneleigh's grounds.<sup>13</sup> Kiser and Lathrop's 1913 atlas is similar to the 1908 map but denotes more landscaped features (Figures 11-12). Bodine's renovations of Stoneleigh and its gardens had a lasting impact still seen today.



Figure 2- Edmund Smith's Stoneleigh house, circa 1880, designed by the Wilson Brothers. (Morrison).

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<sup>13</sup> "Stoneleigh's History" Natural Lands. 2018.  
<https://stoneleighgarden.org/garden/our-story/history/>. Also see: Doell & Doell,  
*Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 4.



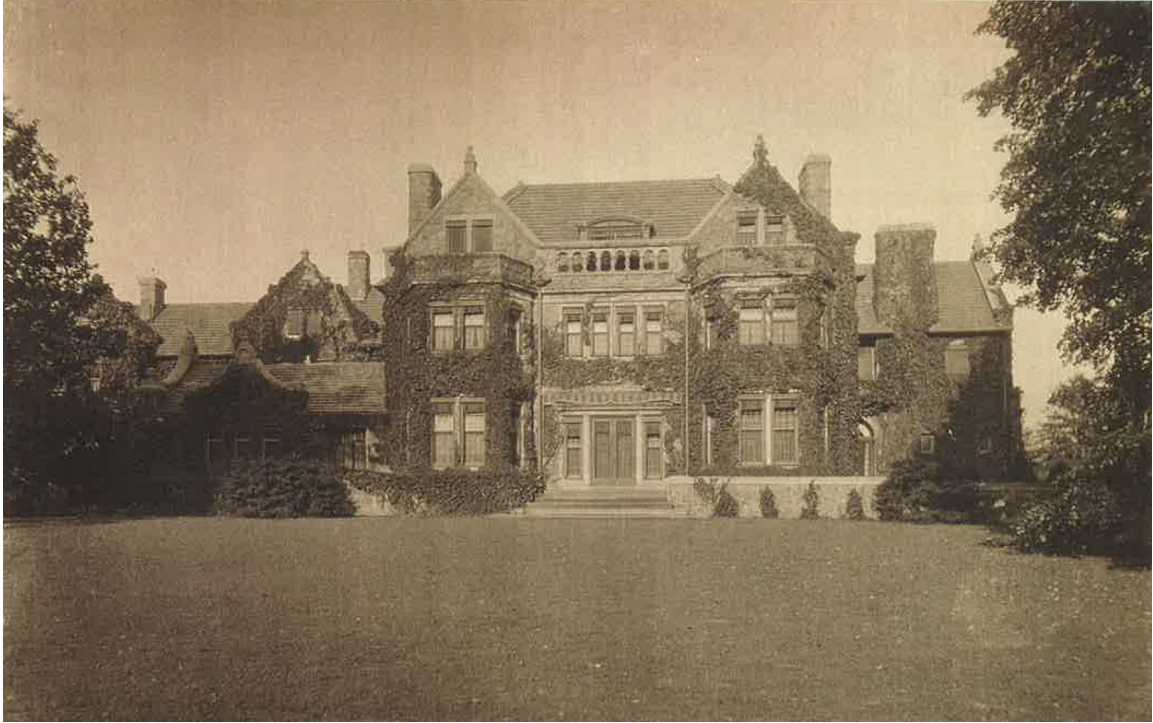


Figure 3- Samuel Bodine's Stoneleigh house, rebuilt in the Tudor Revival Style, designed by Guy King and Everett & Mead. Photograph circa 1913. (Samuel Bodine Family Photos).

After Bodine's death in 1932, Otto Haas, an entrepreneur and philanthropist purchased Stoneleigh. The Franklin Survey Property Atlas from 1937 denotes a smaller, subdivided Stoneleigh with 21.7 acres (Figures 13-14). Samuel Bodine separated nineteen acres to the north of Stoneleigh for his son William. This map also indicates that Bodine's garden complex is now located on part of William Bodine's property and an adjacent 6.38-acre property which is not labelled. The Olmsted Brothers assisted with the subdivision of three other sections from Stoneleigh's property along Montgomery Avenue.<sup>14</sup> The philanthropic Haas family is well-known in the Philadelphia region for their

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<sup>14</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 8.



generous support of the arts and culture. Otto Haas gained his wealth in founding Rohm & Haas, a specialty chemical producer.<sup>15</sup> Haas quickly amassed a large fortune, and he desired to help other people, making Philadelphia and its surrounding areas a better place. In 1945, Haas created a foundation originally intended to assist with post-war problems. Later the foundation turned into the William Penn Foundation which works to improve the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through education, conservation and culture.<sup>16</sup> Stoneleigh was Haas' primary residence for just over thirty years. The Franklin Survey Property Atlas from 1948 conveys increased suburban development along Spring Mill Road and Montgomery Avenue, with few changes to Stoneleigh (Figures 15-16). The Franklin Survey Property Atlas from 1961 indicates a large subdivision through the neighboring Clairemont property on the north (Figure 17). A section of William Bodine's property was separated for his son, William Bodine Jr, both of these lots were originally part of Stoneleigh. The previously unlabeled 6.38 acres with part of Bodine's garden complex is now labeled with Phoebe Haas, same as Stoneleigh. Similar to Bodine and Smith, Haas was passionate about Stoneleigh's gardens. The constant attention to the landscape enhanced the preservation of Stoneleigh's naturalistic appearance. The

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<sup>15</sup> "The Haas Family: A Philadelphia Institution" Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. 2019. <https://www.medalofphilanthropy.org/haas-family-philadelphia-institution/>

<sup>16</sup> "The Haas Family."

extended involvement of the Olmstead brothers adds to the prominence and importance of the property.

Otto Haas' foundation and planned landscapes live on through the work of his children and grandchildren, while leaving Stoneleigh as a symbol of untouched, naturalistic beauty. Stoneleigh has remained largely untouched, because it remained in the Haas family for almost eighty years. In 1964, Otto Haas's son John bought Stoneleigh.<sup>17</sup> Similar to his father, John is known for giving his time and resources to people and places in need. John worked with his father in the thriving Rohm & Haas Chemical Company. John F. Morrison, a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, describes, "But as devoted as he was to the internationally famous chemical company, his charitable interests commanded much of his long life. They included the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, of which he was former president; a boys and girls club in Nicetown; and Leon Sullivan's Opportunities Industrialization Centers."<sup>18</sup> Haas remained an active member of the community, constantly putting others needs before his own. Haas' charisma represented his good nature and kindness for all people. The naturalistic sense of the gardens at Stoneleigh is very different from

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<sup>17</sup> "Stoneleigh's History" Natural Lands. 2018.

<https://stoneleighgarden.org/garden/our-story/history/>

<sup>18</sup> John F. Morrison, "Chemical Heir John C. Haas, Who Gave Away Millions To Charities, Dies At 92" *Philadelphia Inquirer*. April 5, 2011.

[http://www.philly.com/philly/obituaries/20110405\\_Chemical\\_heir\\_John\\_C\\_Haas\\_who\\_gave\\_away\\_millions\\_to\\_charities\\_dies\\_at\\_92.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/obituaries/20110405_Chemical_heir_John_C_Haas_who_gave_away_millions_to_charities_dies_at_92.html)

other meticulously trimmed public gardens, including Chanticleer and the Morris Arboretum. The Haas family's good stewardship is represented through the well-preserved grounds, and the good condition of the house. Fortunately, Stoneleigh and its surrounding green space have remained intact after one hundred and forty-two years. Stoneleigh is one of few intact estates from the expansion of the Pennsylvania Railroad era in the late nineteenth century.

## Historic Maps



Figure 4- *Atlas of Bryn Mawr and Vicinity of Properties along the Pennsylvania Railroad, 1881*, depicting Edmund Smith's 65-acre property.

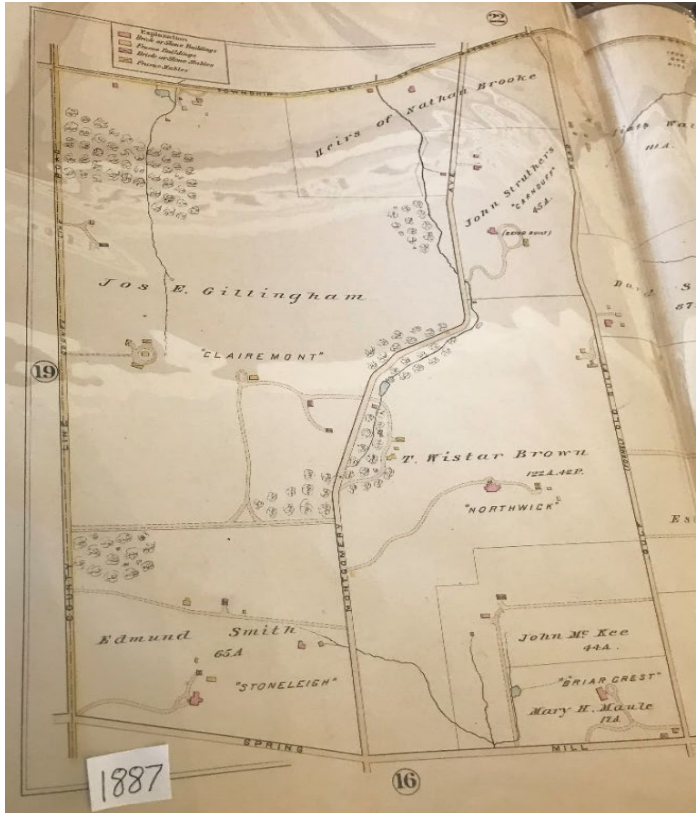


Figure 5- Atlas of Properties along The Pennsylvania Railroad, 1887.



Figure 6- Atlas of Properties along The Pennsylvania Railroad, 1887, conveying Edmund Smith's 65-acre property.



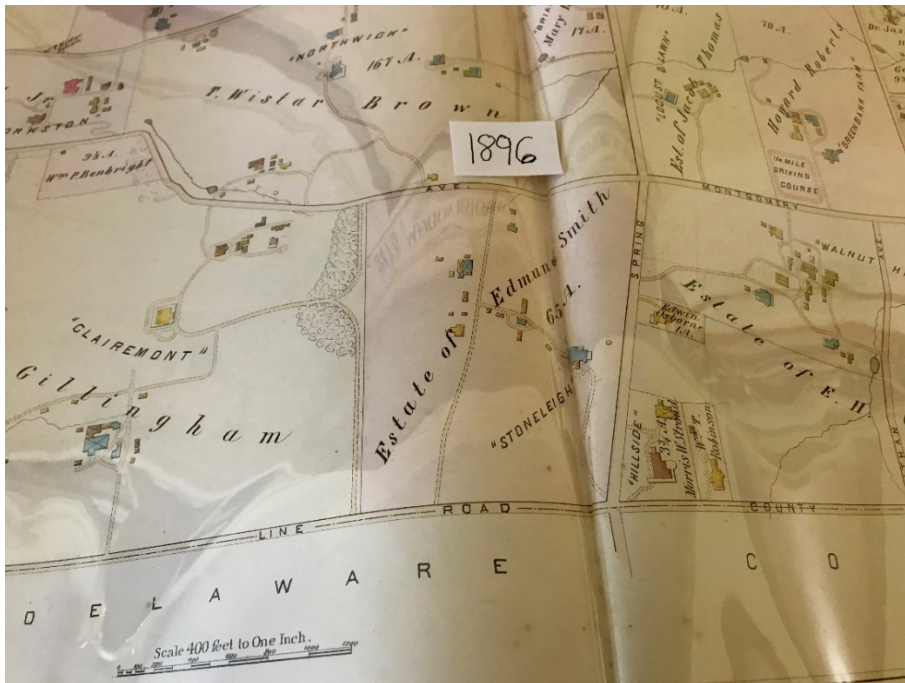


Figure 7- Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County, 1896.



Figure 8- Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County, 1896, highlighting Edmund Smith's 65-acre property.



Figure 9- Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1908.



Figure 10- Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1908, Zoomed in map, highlighting Samuel Bodine's 65-acre property.





Figure 11- Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1913.



Figure 12- Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1913, highlighting Samuel Bodine's 65-acre property.





Figure 13- Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1937.

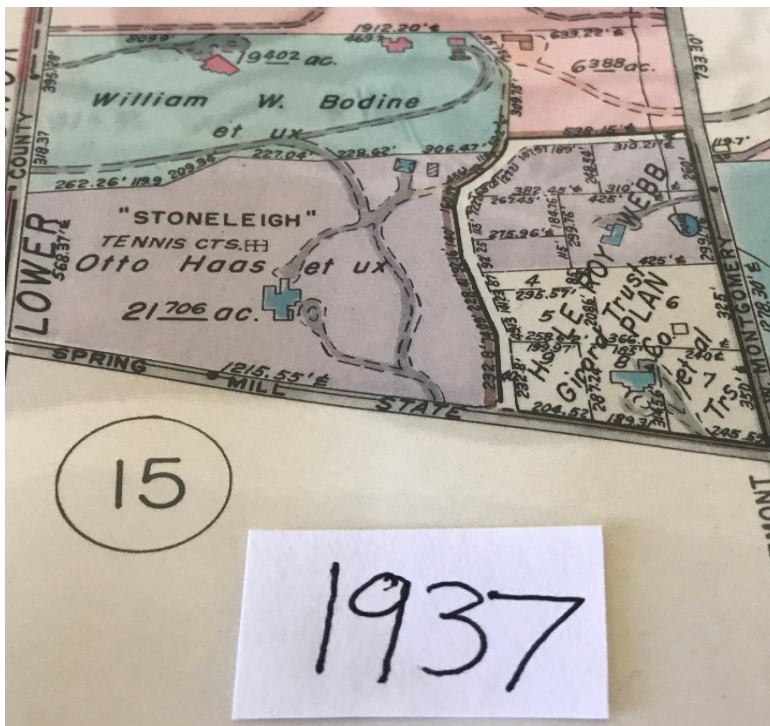


Figure 14- Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1937, highlighting Otto Haas' 21.7- acre property, with subdivided parcels on the north and east sides.



Figures 15 and 16- Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1948, highlighting Otto Haas' 21.7-acre property.



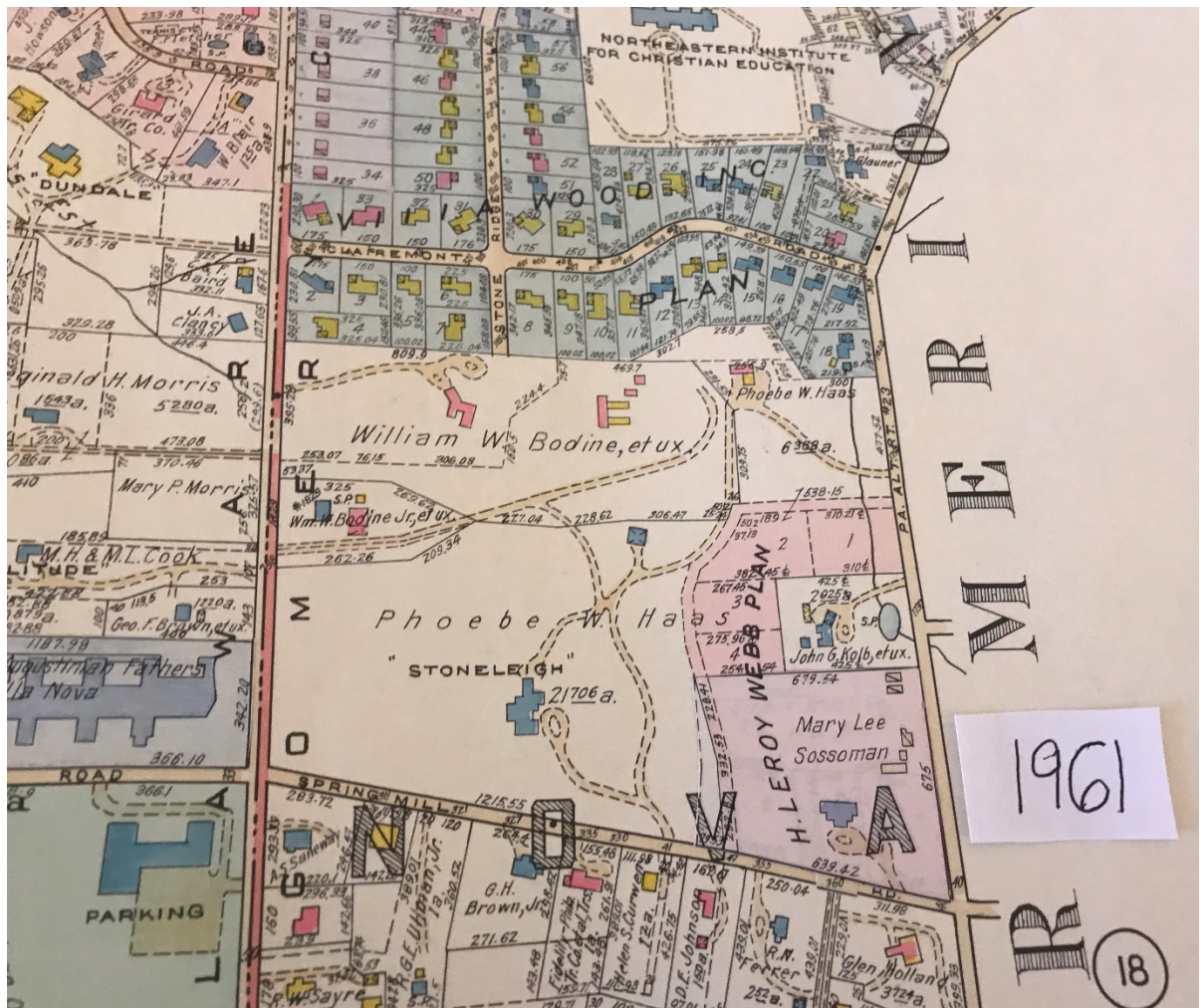


Figure 17- Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1961, highlighting Phoebe Haas' 21.7-acre property.

## Landscape History

Several landscape architects designed portions of Stoneleigh's landscape and grounds. Charles Miller worked at Stoneleigh for Edmund Smith, the estate's first owner, from 1878 to 1881<sup>19</sup>. Smith commissioned Charles Miller to plan gardens and outbuildings for Stoneleigh, beginning in 1878. Miller gained his experience in landscape design and engineering, at Kew Gardens in England, which is celebrated for its elaborate designs and landscaping.<sup>20</sup> In 1863, Miller moved to Philadelphia, where he completed landscaping projects in Mount Airy, and served as chief of Horticulture for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Fairmount Park.<sup>21</sup> Miller's expertise encouraged Edmund Smith to envision Stoneleigh as a horticultural amenity as well as a farm. According to Edmund Smith's farm journal, Miller created plans for the placement of gardens, an icehouse, and carriage house.<sup>22</sup> The exact date of the existing carriage house is unknown and may date to Miller's 1878 plans. Although, Stoneleigh's landscape changed significantly after Miller's involvement, his initial plans laid the foundation for later projects, which connected the property's grounds and greenspace.

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<sup>19</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment for Stoneleigh*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Pleasance Crawford, "Of Grounds Tastefully Laid Out: the Landscaping of Public Buildings in 19th Century Ontario" Accessed April 5, 2019, [https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/71684/vol11\\_3\\_3\\_7.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/71684/vol11_3_3_7.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>21</sup> Crawford, "Of Grounds Tastefully Laid Out."

<sup>22</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment for Stoneleigh*, 3.

Frank Miles Day's work linked Stoneleigh with prominent buildings built during the beginning of the twentieth century. A Philadelphia-based architect, Frank Miles Day began his practice in 1887.<sup>23</sup> He studied architecture at both the University of Pennsylvania and the South Kensington School of Art in London.<sup>24</sup> Although Day is mainly credited with the construction of commercial architectural buildings, he designed a brick garden complex for Stoneleigh in 1901, which includes a cottage, garden enclosure surrounded by high walls, outbuildings, and a stable.<sup>25</sup> This unusual features of the enclosed garden relates more closely to a small English garden, than to a typical private American landscape. Day's garden complex remains intact on the neighboring property of 1800 Montgomery Avenue, no longer part of Stoneleigh since the property was divided during the 1920s (Figures 13-14).<sup>26</sup>

Attempting to develop a more elaborate network of gardens and decorative greenspaces, Bodine hired the firm Pentecost & Vitale. Italian by birth, Ferruccio Vitale studied landscape architecture in Italy and France.<sup>27</sup> Vitale's knowledge of European gardens and landscapes gave him a broader perspective

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<sup>23</sup> "Frank Miles Day (1861-1918)" Penn Design: Architectural Archives. Accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.design.upenn.edu/architectural-archives/frank-miles-day-1861-1918>

<sup>24</sup> Penn Design, "Frank Miles Day (1861-1918)."

<sup>25</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp (Director of Historic Preservation for the Lower Merion Conservancy), Conversation with Author, April 11, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment for Stoneleigh*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> "Ferruccio Vitale" United States Commission Of The Fine Arts. Accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.cfa.gov/about-cfa/who-we-are/ferruccio-vitale>

of the possibilities within natural settings. In 1904, Vitale emigrated to New York, where he worked with Parsons and Pentecost. In 1905, he created the firm, Pentecost & Vitale, which completed projects from the New York to Washington D.C. areas<sup>28</sup> Vitale's ornamental style of garden design relied on elaborate, decorative elements. Pentecost and Vitale transformed Stoneleigh's gardens into a more formal, or 'Beaux Arts,' style, from 1905 to 1906 (Figure 18).<sup>29</sup> The firm designed a hedged forecourt linking the mansion with a new formal driveway (Figure 19).<sup>30</sup> They created grand grassy terraces connecting the mansion and the west lawn.<sup>31</sup> Northwest of the mansion, Pentecost & Vitale designed two formal gardens, one circular with an Italianate pergola, and the other for cultivating fruits, vegetables and roses (Figure 20-21).<sup>32</sup> Pentecost & Vitale's circle garden, pergola and circle drive have survived as prominent structural elements of the Stoneleigh property.

The renowned landscape architecture firm of the Olmsted Brothers influenced the designs of Stoneleigh's grounds for the several decades. Frederick Law Olmsted began practicing landscape architecture in 1857, in New York City.<sup>33</sup> In 1882, Olmsted moved his firm to Brookline, Massachusetts and was

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<sup>28</sup> United States Commission Of The Fine Arts, "Ferruccio Vitale"

<sup>29</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Charles E. Beveridge. "The Olmsted Firm – An Introduction" National Association For Olmsted Parks. Accessed April 5, 2019. <http://www.olmsted.org/the-olmsted-legacy/the-olmsted-firm/an-introduction>

well known for his naturalistic, flowing landscapes.<sup>34</sup> Olmsted, Sr. stopped practicing landscape architecture in 1895, and in 1898, two of his sons, John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr formed the firm Olmstead Brothers.<sup>35</sup> The Olmsted Brothers followed Olmsted Sr.'s design principles, and naturalistic aesthetics, as they created impressive, notable landscapes. Bodine hired the Olmstead Brothers to revise Pentecost and Vitale's landscape and develop a more manageable, less formal plan (Figure 22).<sup>36</sup> The Olmsted Brothers redesigned the rose garden and added a rockery, to create garden rooms (Figure 23).<sup>37</sup> By removing Pentecost & Vitale's formal terraces and forecourt, the Olmsted Brothers created a less rigid, naturalistic landscape with less geometry.<sup>38</sup>

After Bodine, Otto Haas continued to contract the Olmsted Brothers for to maintain Stoneleigh's grounds (Figures 24-25). The Olmsted Brothers' designs of the Great Lawn, meadow and rockery are still in place. Small arbors surround the rockery, giving it the feel of a room. The layers of landscape gardening at Stoneleigh created over decades by Charles Miller, Frank Miles Day, Pentecost & Vitale and the Olmsted Brothers have shaped Stoneleigh's grounds, speaking to fashion trend in garden and landscape design.

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<sup>34</sup> Beveridge. "The Olmsted Firm."

<sup>35</sup> Beveridge. "The Olmsted Firm."

<sup>36</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 8.



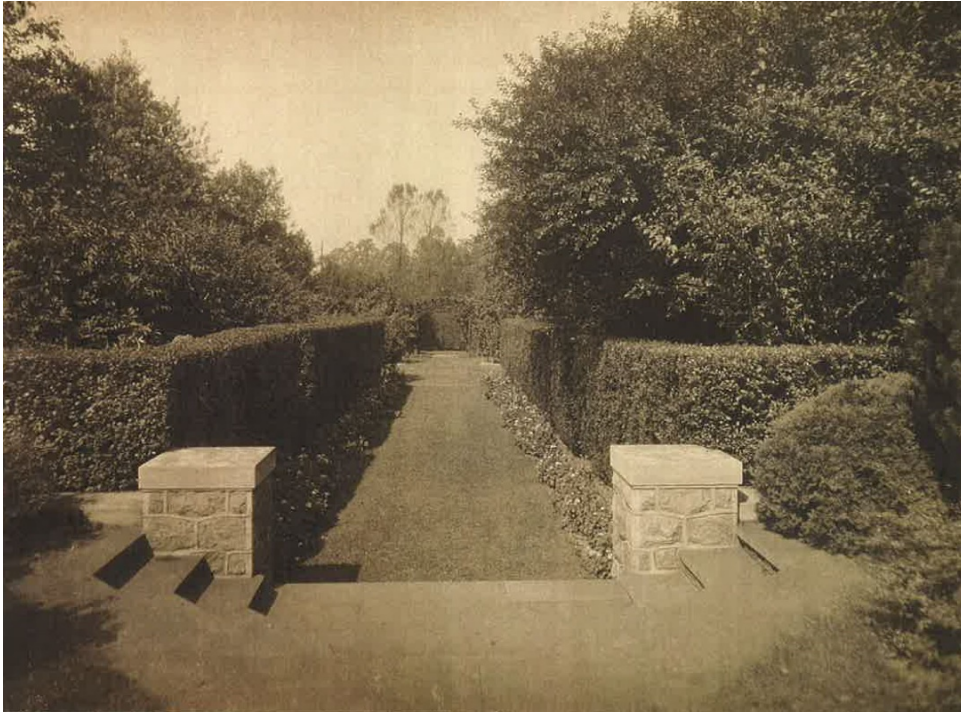


Figure 18- Formal Hedge Pathway, north of the house, designed by Pentecost & Vitale, circa 1901, (Samuel Bodine Family Photographs).



Figure 19- Pentecost & Vitale's Hedged Forecourt, circa 1901, (Samuel Bodine Family Photographs).





Figure 20- Circle Garden designed by Pentecost & Vitale, circa 1908, (Samuel Bodine Family Photographs).

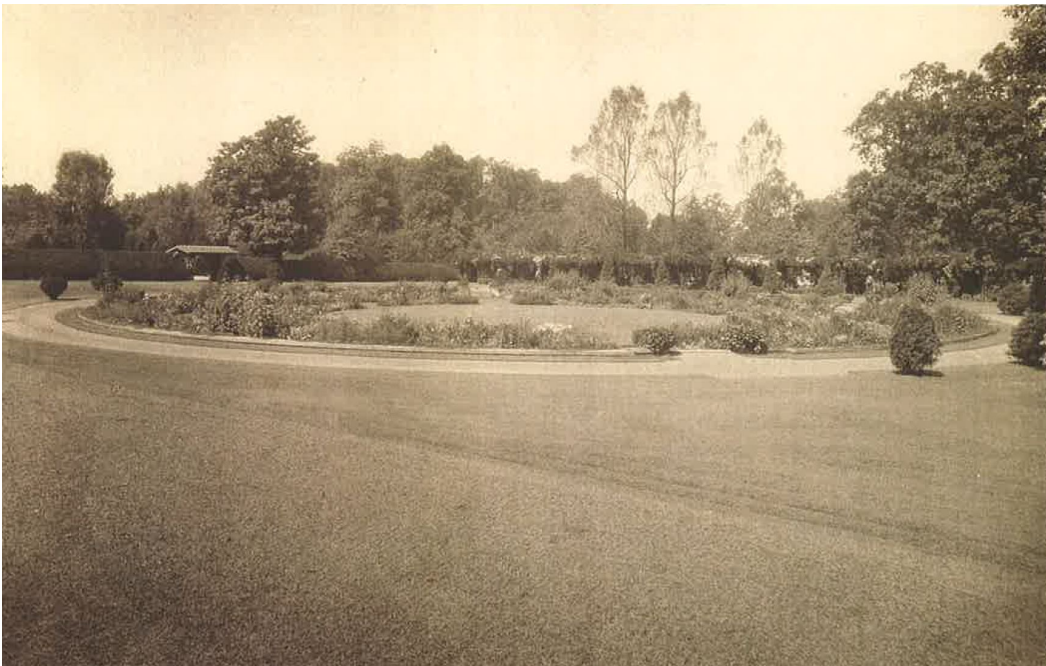


Figure 21- Circle Garden designed by Pentecost & Vitale, circa 1908, (Samuel Bodine Family Photographs).

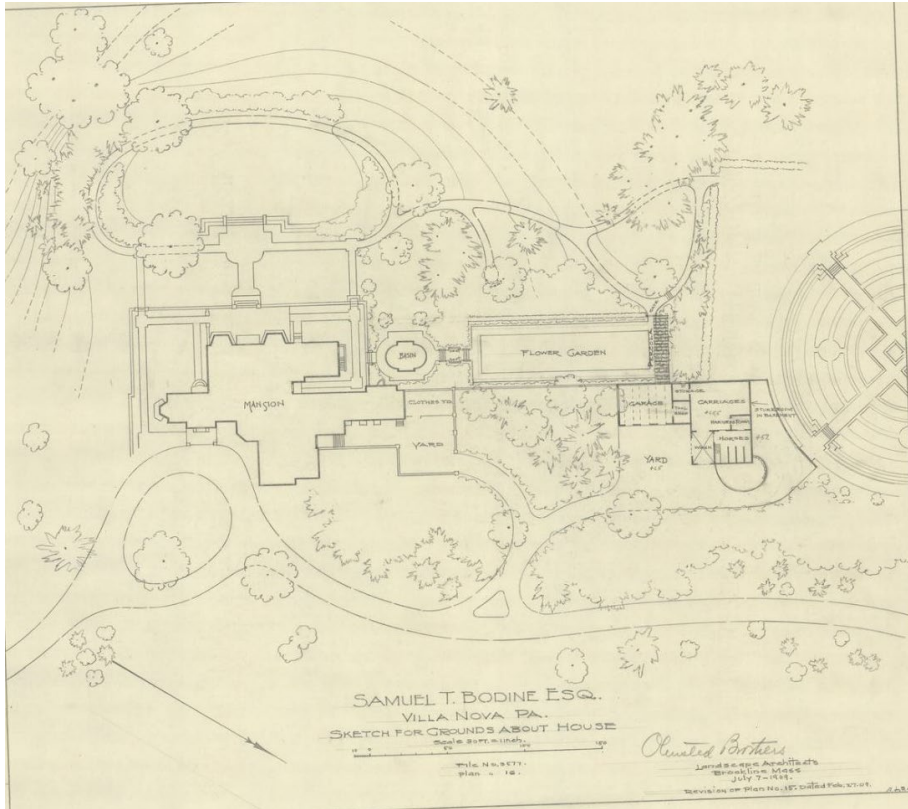


Figure 22- One of the Olmsted Brothers' Plans for Stoneleigh, July 7, 1909, (Olmsted Archives).



Figure 23- Rockery Garden Room, designed by the Olmsted Brothers, circa 1920, (Olmsted Archives).





Figure 24- Circle Garden, also designed by the Olmsted Brothers, 1920, (Olmsted Archives).



Figure 25- Panoramic view of the Circle Garden, 1958, (Olmsted Archives).

### Stoneleigh Today

Today Stoneleigh serves as an inviting public retreat, away from traffic and busy city life. Although, the property is situated on a corner lot, the natural landscapes take precedence over exterior noise. Visitors enter the property through an entrance on County Line Road. By taking paths to the right, visitors will find remarkable trees which have been standing for several generations (Figures 26 and 27). The great lawn is situated on the western front of the house and is an example of the Olmsted's attempt in eliminating elements of Pentecost & Vitale's more formal plans (Figure 28).<sup>39</sup> On the east side of the mansion lies the meadow, which extends from the driveway (Figure 29). Curvilinear pathways and some scattered benches enhance the peaceful setting of the meadow (Figure 30). The driveway winds down to the grand, stone carriage house which was built around 1878 (Figures 31-34).<sup>40</sup> Paths and trails sweep along the outer edges of Stoneleigh's property and create a physical border around the house and carriage-house. Since Bodine rebuilt the mansion, the Carriage House is believed to be the most historically significant building on Stoneleigh's property. To the east of the Carriage House, is the last remaining greenhouse on the property which was likely designed by the Olmsted Brothers (Figure 35). Through the trees, are the two formal gardens, which were planted

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<sup>39</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 10.

north of the mansion and heavily altered by both Pentecost & Vitale and the Olmsted Brothers. The first garden is called a rockery or garden room, which Olmsted created (Figures 36-39).<sup>41</sup> Previously Smith and Bodine had used this space for potato, vegetable, and fruit gardens.<sup>42</sup> To the north of the rockery, is the Circle Garden which was designed by Pentecost & Vitale, and then adjusted by the Olmsted Brothers (Figure 40-41).<sup>43</sup> Pentecost & Vitale designed the existing pergola which runs along the north side of the circle garden (Figure 42-43). The 1908 and 1913 maps identify the pergola as a wooden structure (Figures 9-12). This precludes that the structure was later encased in stone, with a wooden overhang. The western end of the pergola has a red gate, welcoming visitors into the garden (Figure 44). South of these gates is one of the historic lychgates (Figure 46). Visitors will notice several lychgates placed around the property. These decorative pieces today, historically served as formal entrances to English Churchyards and later English gardens.<sup>44</sup> The lychgate in figure 46 faces the area which previously held Otto Haas' tennis court. To the west of the Circle Garden are flowering trees, and a large planter (Figure 45). The mansion and all of the existing garden features are significant to Stoneleigh's natural and cultural values of the site.

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<sup>41</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Doell & Doell, *Historic Landscape Assessment For Stoneleigh*, 5, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.





Figures 26 and 27- Historic trees along the north section of Stoneleigh's property, March 18, 2019.





Figure 28- Great lawn with Stoneleigh's western façade or garden front in the background, May 3, 2019.



Figure 29- View of Stoneleigh's eastern façade, from the meadow, May 3, 2019.





Figure 30- View looking northeast through Stoneleigh's meadow, May 3, 2019.



Figure 31- Flowering tree along the curved driveway, leading to the Carriage House, May 3, 2019.





Figure 32- Stoneleigh Carriage House, circa 1878, March 18, 2019.



Figure 33- Stoneleigh Carriage House, March 18, 2019.





Figure 34- East façade of the Stoneleigh Carriage House, March 18, 2019.



Figure 35- Extant Greenhouse to the east of Stoneleigh's Carriage House, March 18, 2019.





Figure 36- First arbor in the Rockery Garden, looking west, March 18, 2019.



Figure 37- First arbor in the Rockery Garden, looking east, March 18, 2019.





Figure 38- Part of the Rockery Garden, looking south, March 18, 2019.



Figure 39- Part of the Rockery Garden, looking north, March 18, 2019.





Figure 40- View of the Circle Garden, looking north with the pergola in the background, May 3, 2019.



Figure 41- Panorama of the Circle Garden, May 3, 2019.





Figure 42- Looking north from the Circle Garden, along the pergola, March 18, 2019.



Figure 43- Looking through the pergola, to the east, March 18, 2019.





Figure 44- West end of the pergola, with a welcoming entrance to the gardens, March 18, 2019.



Figure 45- Flowering trees with large planter, west of the Circle Garden, May 3, 2019.





Figure 46- Lychgate at the edge of the previous tennis court, March 18, 2019

### Protection of Stoneleigh

In recognition of Stoneleigh's vast green space and natural beauty, John and Chara Haas sought to preserve the property's gardens and grounds. On June 14, 1996, John and Chara Haas secured a Conservation Easement with Natural Lands Trust.<sup>45</sup> Conservation easements protect and preserve parcels of land, so they can remain as open space in perpetuity. Easements protect rural acreage as well as smaller open spaces in urban and suburban settings. These documents are legal agreements, which control the amount of development that can occur on a property in perpetuity.<sup>46</sup> The owner of an eased property assigns monitoring rights to a local land trust.<sup>47</sup> The Stoneleigh conservation easement is a legally binding document which aims to preserve the Stoneleigh property as is forever. This document clearly defines specific restrictions for maintaining and altering the property in the future. The easement decreases the chance of disruption among natural, and landscaped portions of the property. A section of the easement states, "Scenic Resources: To preserve for the enjoyment of the general public scenic views of the landscaped periphery of Stoneleigh and intermittent views of broad rolling expanses of lawns, large trees and the Main Residence from the heavily travelled public thoroughfares of County Line Road

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<sup>45</sup> "Conservation Easement For 330 Spring Mill Road." Filed With the Montgomery County, PA Recorder Of Deeds. Recorded April 29, 2016. Book 5996, Page 2145.

<sup>46</sup> Janet Diehl, and Thomas S. Barrett. *The Conservation Handbook: Managing Land Conservation And Historic Preservation Easement Programs*. (Washington D.C: Land Trust Alliance, 1988.), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Diehl, and Barrett. *The Conservation Handbook*, 5.

and Spring Mill Road, which together include approximately 2,300 feet of frontage around Stoneleigh.”<sup>48</sup> Both Natural Lands and The Haas family recognize the natural and social values of preserving the Stoneleigh property. The landscaped areas, pathways, mature trees, and garden structures help to define this property. A section of the easement describes, “The easement restrictions intend to minimize disturbances of the woodland portions of the Property by emitting construction, improvements, clearing, unsustainable forestry practices and other practices that might damage the woodlands. The Property has numerous mature trees as well as native understory trees and shrubs.”<sup>49</sup> When Natural Lands acquired Stoneleigh, the easement transferred to the Lower Merion Conservancy for monitoring.<sup>50</sup> Natural Lands’ involvement and continued maintenance for years to come will allow Stoneleigh to remain as a preserved open space amid growing Lower Merion Township.

Natural Lands and Stoneleigh began a partnership when John and Chara Haas purchased the conservation easement with Natural Lands, in 1996. Natural Lands, headquartered in Media, Pennsylvania strives to preserve land and create open spaces for all citizens’ enjoyment. Their mission states, “Preserving and

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<sup>48</sup> “Conservation Easement For 330 Spring Mill Road,” Filed With the Montgomery County, PA Recorder Of Deeds. Recorded April 29, 2016. Book 5996, Page 2148.

<sup>49</sup> “Conservation Easement For 330 Spring Mill Road,” Filed With the Montgomery County, PA Recorder Of Deeds. Recorded April 29, 2016. Book 5996, Page 2148.

<sup>50</sup> Rick Trailies (Senior Director Of Municipal Planning at Natural Lands), Interview with Author, January 7, 2019.

nurturing nature's wonders. Creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. We save open space, care for nature, and connect people to the outdoors."<sup>51</sup> Natural Lands has preserved 24,000 acres through the creation of public nature preserves and conservation easements.<sup>52</sup> Natural Lands' preserves provide users with quality open space, many trails, and scenic views. The preservation of this acreage has created permanently protected open space, that will remain undeveloped. As rural areas are increasingly threatened by the possibility of sprawl and unconstrained development, it is important that dedicated organizations strive to preserve land. By actively protecting open space, future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy these beautiful, natural areas. Also, the preservation of open space creates buffers between wetlands and urban areas which protects wildlife habitats. Natural Lands monitors and holds a total of 373 easements, protecting large areas of green space and wildlife habitats.<sup>53</sup> Natural Lands has had a positive impact on this Delaware Valley region. Land preservation is a powerful force for regulating growth. Similar to historic preservation, land preservation strives to protect pieces of the past, while planning for new development

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<sup>51</sup> "Natural Lands Home Page" Natural Lands. 2019. <https://natlands.org/>

<sup>52</sup> "Saving Open Space" Natural Lands. 2019. <https://natlands.org/what-we-do/saving-open-space/>

<sup>53</sup> Natural Lands, "Saving Open Space."

Once both John and Chara Haas died in 2011, Stoneleigh's future was in the hands of John and Chara's children. The Haas' children consulted Natural Lands' staff and discussed possible futures for Stoneleigh.<sup>54</sup> John and Chara Haas loved nature and wanted to share their passion for the outdoors with others. In their wills, John and Chara Haas planned for Stoneleigh to be donated to a nonprofit.<sup>55</sup> After some consideration, the Haas descendants decided Natural Lands was the best option for stewarding and maintaining this scenic property. By handing this property over to Natural Lands, many people will now have the opportunity enjoy Stoneleigh's tranquil grounds. Stoneleigh appears smaller and less formal than other well-known public gardens today. Alex Jones, a journalist, describes, "At 42 acres, the Main Line estate-turned-public-garden...may seem petite compared to the sprawling grounds of Longwood. Its open spaces and knotted trunks may look rather minimalist next to a manicured, perpetually blooming garden such as Chanticleer. But that's all the better to show off the space's striking, unique beauty."<sup>56</sup> Stoneleigh offers a rare public, open setting, within a busy, developed township. The property

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<sup>54</sup> Rick Trailies, Interview with author, January 7, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Virginia A. Smith, "New Public Garden Opens Sunday On Former Haas Estate In Villanova" *The Inquirer*. May 12, 2018.  
[http://www.philly.com/philly/business/real\\_estate/stoneleigh-otto-phoebe-john-chara-haas-natural-lands-native-plants-20180509.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/business/real_estate/stoneleigh-otto-phoebe-john-chara-haas-natural-lands-native-plants-20180509.html)

<sup>56</sup> Alex Jones, "Stoneleigh Is A New Kind Of Green Space For Philadelphia: A Place Where Plants Will Rule" *Grid Magazine*. May 10, 2018.  
<http://www.gridphilly.com/grid-magazine/2018/5/10/stoneleigh-is-a-new-kind-of-green-space-for-philadelphia>

already serves as a valuable asset to the surrounding community as an escape from heavily travelled areas.

In an attempt to protect Stoneleigh's grand mansion, Natural Lands knew added preservation measures were necessary. On August 4, 2016, Natural Lands created a façade easement for Stoneleigh with the Preservation Alliance For Greater Philadelphia.<sup>57</sup> Façade easements are legally binding agreements which aim to preserve the exterior façade of a historic structure as is. Preservationists, Norman Tyler, Ted Ligibel and Ilene Tyler explain, "Easements can potentially be a valuable means to both protect historic buildings and provide value to their owners. For example, the owner of a property with an architecturally significant façade can agree to give up the right to change the façade in perpetuity in exchange for a property easement."<sup>58</sup> This document will ensure Stoneleigh's continued protection against developers and others who may threaten the building's prominence. Through the terms set in this easement, The Preservation Alliance and Natural Lands acknowledge the historic value and architectural significance of the Stoneleigh mansion. A section of the easement states, "Without the prior written consent of the Grantee (The Preservation Alliance of

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<sup>57</sup> *Declaration of Easement And Restrictions With Respect To Historic Preservation: 330 Spring Mill Road in Villanova, Pennsylvania*. Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, August 6, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction To Its History, Principles And Practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2009), 243.



Greater Philadelphia), which shall not be unreasonably withheld, Grantor (Natural Lands) shall not cause or permit any construction, alteration, remodeling, demolition, or dismantling which would change in any material way the exterior façade of the historic structure or the appearance thereof as viewed from any location on or off the property.”<sup>59</sup> These restrictions state the clear protection of the property and the Preservation Alliance’s position within this easement.

The Stoneleigh mansion has many decorative architectural details and unusual elements lining the roof and façade (Figures 47-48). The easement aims to preserve Stoneleigh’s historic exterior. A section of the easement states, “Grantor (Natural Lands) shall not cause, permit or suffer the removal of any of the original or historic building elements of the exterior façade from the historic structure without the permission of the Grantee (The Preservation Alliance), except when the replacement of those elements and facades are required in the event of imminent danger to the building or public health and safety.”<sup>60</sup> The requirements set forth in this easement will allow for the continued monitoring and preservation of the house. The Stoneleigh mansion is unlike most buildings

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<sup>59</sup> *Declaration of Easement And Restrictions With Respect To Historic Preservation: 330 Spring Mill Road in Villanova, Pennsylvania*. Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, August 6, 2016, 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Declaration of Easement And Restrictions With Respect To Historic Preservation: 330 Spring Mill Road in Villanova, Pennsylvania*. Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County, August 6, 2016, 4.

built today and deserves to be celebrated for its historicizing architectural style, high quality materials, embellishments, and details. Through monitoring, maintenance and historic preservation efforts, the main house at Stoneleigh will continue to withstand the test of time and outlive other buildings which are not valued and protected in the same way.



Figure 47- Bay window with decorative carvings on the south wing, March 18, 2019.



Figure 48- Bay window with decorative carvings along, the northeast wing, March 18, 2019.

### **Recent Improvements To Stoneleigh**

After Stoneleigh's transfer to Natural Lands staff members began to plan for the property's transformation into a public site. Rick Trailies, a registered landscape architect and senior director of municipal planning for Natural Lands, worked with Natural Lands' former President, Molly Morrison for changing Stoneleigh's layout to meet accessibility requirements. Trailies invited five of the top landscape architecture firms to survey Stoneleigh and create potential landscape plans.<sup>61</sup> Natural Lands shared some of the early Olmsted Brothers' plans for Stoneleigh with the prospective landscape architecture firms. Trailies believes the property's historic significance was the driving force for the recent landscape plans.<sup>62</sup> The impact and presence of the Olmstead brothers for over thirty years adds historical and cultural value to Stoneleigh. Natural Lands staff members created plans for new pathways, lighting and plantings throughout Stoneleigh. In August 2016, NL hired Ethan Kauffman as Stoneleigh's director, and appointed several horticulturists to complete daily projects. NL constructed a parking lot was constructed on an additional parcel of land acquired along County Line Road. Lower Merion Township set requirements on the amount of greenery and shrubs for the parking lot.<sup>63</sup> During the landscape projects,

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<sup>61</sup> Rick Trailies (Senior Director Of Municipal Planning at Natural Lands), Interview with Author, January 7, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> Rick Trailies (Senior Director Of Municipal Planning at Natural Lands), Interview with Author, January 7, 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

horticulturists moved some of the lychgates closer to the parking lot, along the north and west end of the property (Figure 28). Traditionally, a lychgate is a place for funeral rites in England, later these gates were moved to entrances of gardens for wedding traditions (Figure 49).<sup>64</sup> Kauffman takes pride in caring for each aspect of the property from small shrubs to all of the old trees. He explained that there is a healthcare management care for the large trees on the property.<sup>65</sup> Throughout Stoneleigh, there are one hundred and fifty hemlocks which need care and treatment each year. Kauffman and the horticulturists work with a computerized plant inventory system, which keeps track of all of the different types of plants on the property. Kauffman admits that Stoneleigh has many ‘old trees’ but had only a few ‘young’ trees before Natural Lands’ involvement.<sup>66</sup> Under Kauffman’s direction, over five hundred new trees were planted throughout the property, along with many new plantings by the house, pool house and parking lot.<sup>67</sup> As maintenance projects and additional plantings continue, the public has the benefit of enjoying Stoneleigh year-round.

The stone residence at Stoneleigh has been well preserved and recently underwent renovation projects for updating it. The Organ Historical Society currently rents part of the house and uses a few rooms for their archives.

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<sup>64</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

Stoneleigh had an old elevator, and Natural Lands installed a commercial one in its place. Dennis Canakis, Stoneleigh's property manager, explained that the house is relatively unchanged except for the bedrooms, which now serve as office space.<sup>68</sup> The large bathroom on the second floor has become a conference room. Natural Lands added public restrooms on the first floor. NL hired contractors to update the house's utility systems and all of the paint.<sup>69</sup> Ethan Kauffman considers some of the restoration techniques 'a box in a box,' since a fireplace on the third floor remains intact but was covered up.<sup>70</sup> Despite the added use of office space in certain rooms Stoneleigh maintains its charm, and architectural details. Canakis explained that the tiger oak floors and paneling are very valuable.<sup>71</sup> Renovation and careful maintenance projects ensure that Stoneleigh stays in well-preserved condition, despite the addition of new programs and events.

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<sup>68</sup> Dennis Canakis (Property Manager For Stoneleigh), Meeting with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Dennis Canakis (Property Manager For Stoneleigh), Meeting with Author, March 18, 2019.





Figure 49- Example of an historic lychgate at the Church of St. Margaret, in High Halstow, Great Britain.

### **Eminent Domain Legal Battle**

As the Natural Lands staff prepared for Stoneleigh's Grand Opening in May of 2018, the Lower Merion School Board saw other opportunities for the property (Figure 50). The School District planned to take Stoneleigh through eminent domain for a new school. In Pennsylvania, school districts have the authority to use eminent domain.<sup>72</sup> Lower Merion Township, where Stoneleigh is located, is a prosperous municipality which has been growing each year. Data from the United States Census indicates that the population of Lower Merion township increased from 57,825 to 58,500 people during the years 2010 to 2017,

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<sup>72</sup> Rick Trailies (Senior Director Of Municipal Planning at Natural Lands), Interview with Author, January 7, 2019.

indicating a rise of 675 residents.<sup>73</sup> It appears that this trend will continue.<sup>74</sup> The Lower Merion township is already densely built up, and the School Board does not have many options for the necessary acreage to support a new school and athletic fields.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, Stoneleigh presented a viable option for a school since the property has significant acreage, with flat, open land. Some of the township's schools are experiencing overcrowding challenges. The district predicts it may serve over 9,300 students, a significantly larger student body than the 5,000 total students during the 1980s.<sup>76</sup> Stoneleigh remains in a residential community, with a small section of Villanova University along its western border. Having a school on this property would greatly increase traffic in this area and alter the character of the local community. The eminent domain problem involving Stoneleigh created new challenges for Natural Lands and reinforced the need for stronger protection of this property.

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<sup>73</sup> "Lower Merion Township, Pennsylvania Demographics Data," Town Charts, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.towncharts.com/Pennsylvania/Demographics/Lower-Merion-township-PA-Demographics-data.html>

<sup>74</sup> George Sundell, "Demographic Study Public School Enrollments for Lower Merion School District." Cherry Hill, NJ: Sundance Associates, 2016. [https://www.lmsd.org/uploaded/documents/EnrollmentGrowth/up/Sundance\\_Associates\\_Enrollment\\_Study\\_-\\_November\\_12,\\_2016.pdf](https://www.lmsd.org/uploaded/documents/EnrollmentGrowth/up/Sundance_Associates_Enrollment_Study_-_November_12,_2016.pdf)

<sup>75</sup> Rick Trailies (Senior Director Of Municipal Planning at Natural Lands), Interview with Author, January 7, 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Kathy Boccella, "Lower Merion's New Public Garden Already Threatened By Middle School Plan." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 13, 2018.

<http://www2.philly.com/philly/education/lower-merion-stoneleigh-school-district-eminent-domain-plan-20180510.html>

Eminent Domain offers municipalities a way to continue construction of new infrastructure by compensating landowners whose properties they take acquire. This tool is best used when it benefits the greater public and does not cause citizens to fear governments meddling in their affairs unnecessarily. A common example of the need for eminent domain was through the expansion of railroads. Historians, Sara Bronin and Peter Bryne explain, “As just compensation, which is the full value of the property taken, is to be paid and the amount must be raised by taxation where the land is taken by the government itself.”<sup>77</sup> In the past, the creation of highways, railroads, streets and public utilities, caused local governments to utilize eminent domain and destroy rural properties. The School District attempted to use eminent domain to take over Stoneleigh, a property that is already preserved for the public good. The rule which allows school districts to utilize eminent domain, gives the school district additional authority, separate from the township. Although, homeowners are compensated for property that is ‘taken’ through eminent domain, it is important that this practice only be used as a last resort solution. As properties are evaluated for future uses, their historic and natural values for surrounding communities ought to be considered with potential equal weight.

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<sup>77</sup> Sara C. Bronin and J. Peter Bryne, *Historic Preservation Law*. (New York: Thomas Reuters Foundation Press, 2012), 11.

The possibility of the Lower Merion School Board's use of eminent domain on Stoneleigh spurred increased legal and political involvement. Taking Stoneleigh over by this process, ought to be forbidden since the property has a conservation easement. After former State Representative Kate Harper, a strong supporter of land conservation, met with a past Natural Lands staff member, Representative Harper became concerned about easement properties.<sup>78</sup> She wrote an amendment to a former easement bill, ensuring greater protection for any properties with conservation easements.<sup>79</sup> As the School District continued its deliberation, Stoneleigh's future was threatened, and this bill became significant. Bill 2468 states:

Section 2. Title 26 is amended by adding a section to read: Eminent domain of land subject to conservation easement, Approval required. NO political subdivision, authority, public utility or other body having or exercising powers of eminent domain shall condemn any land subject to a conservation easement for any purpose, unless prior approval has been obtained from the Orphan's Court of the county in which the land is located.<sup>80</sup>

Harper assisted State Representative, Warren Kampf to pass this bill quickly.<sup>81</sup>

This bill offers necessary backing and protection for preserved properties now and in the future. Natural Lands supported Harper in this legal endeavor and

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<sup>78</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> HB 2468. The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, *Limitations on Eminent Domain for Permanently Preserved Land*. Introduced June 6, 2018, Amended June 21, 2018, 2-3. <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2017&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=2468&pn=3803>

<sup>81</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

pushed their attorneys to ensure the bill was signed, going so far to notify Governor Wolf of the bill's importance, and urgency.<sup>82</sup> Bill 2468 continues, "Review.--The Orphans' Court shall review the proposed condemnation and approve the proposed condemnation only if the court determines there is no reasonable and prudent alternative to the utilization of the land subject to a conservation easement for the project."<sup>83</sup> This means that the group vying to utilize a property with a conservation easement needs to present that there is no reasonable alternative. This bill will make it more difficult for municipalities to gain control of conserved properties through eminent domain. The quick process which allowed the creation and review of this bill re-enforces the importance and value of land preservation.

Throughout the eminent domain process involving Stoneleigh, the property received positive and region-wide support. Natural Lands' staff and active community members spread enthusiasm for Stoneleigh by displaying "Save Stoneleigh" yard signs and bumper stickers (Figure 51). Their hard work allowed many citizens in both Delaware and Montgomery Counties, in Pennsylvania to learn of the property's plight. Stoneleigh staff distributed protest postcards, which added to a petition that gained over 20,000 signatures in the

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<sup>82</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> HB 2468. The General Assembly of Pennsylvania, *Limitations on Eminent Domain for Permanently Preserved Land*. Introduced June 6, 2018, Amended June 21, 2018, 3-4. <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2017&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=2468&pn=3803>

month of May.<sup>84</sup> Several directors of notable gardens and arboretums, including Longwood Gardens, wrote letters to the School Board aiming to stop the potential taking of Stoneleigh.<sup>85</sup> Land conservators, garden enthusiasts and many concerned citizens grew to appreciate Stoneleigh and advocate for its protection. Over three hundred supporters of Stoneleigh attended a School Board meeting in late May 2018 and spoke on the property's behalf.<sup>86</sup> Among public attendees at the school board meeting only three people favored taking over Stoneleigh for a new school.<sup>87</sup> Support for Stoneleigh also brought additional recognition throughout the region to Natural Lands. Journalist, Maria Panaritis describes, "[Birding enthusiast Phil] Spear had just thrown a yard sign into the trunk of his car when I asked the Haverford man his opinion. He'd just walked through Stoneleigh for the first time and couldn't have been more impressed. Places like these simply don't exist anywhere near communities as congested and costly as the Philly suburbs."<sup>88</sup> This property's significance is the accessible open space it offers to the public and service as a valuable cultural asset. Stoneleigh gained additional backing from recognition by local news stations, and newspapers. This powerful momentum and community backing with renewed appreciation

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<sup>84</sup> Maria Panaritis, "The Haas Family Gave Stoneleigh Gardens to the Public. Lower Merion Schools Should Keep Their Hands Off of It," *The Inquirer*. June 2, 2018. <http://www2.philly.com/philly/columnists/maria-panaritis/stoneleigh-garden-lower-merion-school-district-john-haas-longwood-maria-panaritis-20180602.html>

<sup>85</sup> Panaritis, "The Haas Family Gave Stoneleigh Gardens to the Public."

<sup>86</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Panaritis, "The Haas Family Gave Stoneleigh Gardens To The Public."



for nature guided Stoneleigh's campaign to sway the Lower Merion School Board.

Stoneleigh's Conservation Easement protects the natural and scenic features of the property, although one section designates an area with development potential. Lots were set aside when the conservation easement was written in 1996. The Conservation Easement describes, "Subject to Review, Subdivision to create a maximum of twelve Lots within the Additional Development Area (as shown on the Conservation Plan). Upon transfer of a Lot within the Additional Development Area the Conservation Easement is released as to that Lot."<sup>89</sup> If Stoneleigh's owner could not feasibly pay for the property in the future, the proposed lots could provide flexibility and possibly generate revenue (Figure 52).<sup>90</sup> These lots were created as part of the conservation easement, with an eye toward strategic preservation, but were not meant to provoke added development. The Lower Merion School Board positioned this section of the Conservation Easement in their favor, as land that could be developed.<sup>91</sup> This statement is not in line with the Easement's intentions and presented Public Relations difficulties. The Conservation Easement's section

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<sup>89</sup> "Conservation Easement For 330 Spring Mill Road," Filed With the Montgomery County, PA Recorder Of Deeds. Recorded April 29, 2016. Book 5996, Page 2150.

<sup>90</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

regarding development potential sparked new setbacks for Natural Lands' advocacy and further stimulated the need for stronger protection.

As the Eminent Domain debate continued, the Lower Merion School Board faced new challenges. The Lower Merion School Board kept Stoneleigh as a potential option, while considering other opportunities. Preservationists, Kathleen Abplanalp and Paul Steinke describe, "In its continued search for a new middle school site, however, the School District has not retreated from its hard stand that historic properties are disposable. The district recently signed an agreement of sale to purchase Clairemont, a Beaux-Arts mansion in Villanova designed by distinguished architect Horace Trumbauer for Morris L. Clothier."<sup>92</sup> The School Board's decision to purchase Clairemont with intent to demolish the mansion is in direct opposition to the township's beliefs in preserving the area's character. Abplanalp, Lower Merion Conservancy's Director of Historic Preservation has been advocating for the preservation of Clairemont, during the past two years.<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, Clairemont does not have everything that the Lower Merion School Board seeks in a new property. Although, the School Board made plans to purchase Clairemont, they determined that the terrain's incline is

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<sup>92</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp and Paul Steinke, "Stoneleigh's Likely Safe but Lower Merion Landmarks Are Still Under Siege" *The Inquirer*, August 14, 2018, <http://www2.philly.com/philly/opinion/commentary/stoneleigh-clairemont-lower-merion-preservation-villanova-20180814.html>

<sup>93</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp (Director of Historic Preservation at the Lower Merion Conservancy), Interview with Author, April 11, 2019.

too steep an incline for athletic fields.<sup>94</sup> This setback allowed the School Board to continue considering the possibility of taking part of the Stoneleigh property. The School Board still seeks space for athletic fields and has their eyes on an uneased previously sold parcel of the Stoneleigh property.

The Lower Merion School Board proposed the possibility of creating new athletic fields at Stoneleigh's proposed building lots, mentioned in the property's Conservation Easement. Maureen McGeehan serves as the Lower Merion Conservancy's Executive Director, which administers Stoneleigh's conservation easement. She describes, "It's almost never heard of that a family would donate something so important to the community to be free and open to enjoy forever. Even the District's initial idea of seizing a piece of the garden for ball fields would ruin the character of the site."<sup>95</sup> The potential development parcel on Stoneleigh's property is beyond the meadow and is part of the property's expansive open views (Figure 52). Molly Morrison, Stoneleigh's former President, also believes the acreage in question offers valuable scenic areas with significant vistas.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Kathy Boccella, "Is Stoneleigh Safe? Lower Merion District Buys Nearby Property For Middle School." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, 2018, <http://www2.philly.com/philly/education/stoneleigh-eminent-domain-lower-merion-school-district-purchase-property-middle-school-20180719.html>

<sup>95</sup> Kathy Boccella, "Lower Merion's New Public Garden Already Threatened By Middle School Plan" *The Inquirer*, May 13, 2018. <http://www2.philly.com/philly/education/lower-merion-stoneleigh-school-district-eminent-domain-plan-20180510.html>

<sup>96</sup> Boccella, "Lower Merion's New Public Garden Already Threatened By Middle School Plan."

Stoneleigh remained in danger of the possible use of eminent domain by the Lower Merion School Board for six months. While the Lower Merion School Board considered other options, they did not discard the possibility of utilizing Stoneleigh. Oliver Bass, Natural Lands' president, explains, "The School Board used Stoneleigh as leverage. They weren't going to let go of the property until they had secured alternatives for the middle school and fields."<sup>97</sup> Ironically, the publicity generated by this fight gave Natural Lands and Stoneleigh greater recognition, and people gained greater appreciation for this landscaped enclave. Once the Lower Merion School Board had made its final arrangements they stopped contemplating Stoneleigh. On November 20, 2018, The Lower Merion School Board formally announced that they had declared another location for athletic fields and ended their possible plan of taking over Stoneleigh. This decision was a momentous success for both Stoneleigh and Natural Lands, securing the future of this beloved property. Morrison, Natural Lands' former President is confident that many generations will benefit from the preservation and protection of Stoneleigh.

The School Board's potential "taking" of additional properties for athletic fields continues to cause unrest in the Lower Merion community. Unfortunately, the School Board has few options for optimal locations for constructing new athletic fields in close proximity to the Clairemont estate. In March of 2019, the

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<sup>97</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

School Board made plans to purchase two adjacent properties to Stoneleigh for constructing new athletic fields. Both of these properties had originally been part of the whole property but were subdivided during the 1920s (Figures 13-14). These two properties were parceled off from Stoneleigh for William Bodine, Samuel Bodine's son, and contain historic structures, including the 1901 Frank Miles Day Garden Complex and William Bodine's 1920's Brick Elizabethan Revival house.<sup>98</sup> Each of the historic structures on these properties has direct links with Stoneleigh's history, and provides a connection with the area's Gilded Age period. Kathleen Abplanalp believes the garden complex is in pristine condition and is a rare surviving example of historic garden buildings. This parcel contains gardens with brick walls on three sides, historic stables and a carriage house.<sup>99</sup> The School Board proposes to rehabilitate and reuse the historic Bodine house, but plans to demolish the garden complex.<sup>100</sup> While the garden complex cannot be seen from the road, its connection to Frank Miles Day, and history of the Main Line emphasizes the value of these buildings. On behalf of the Lower Merion Conservancy, Abplanalp is advocating for the preservation of Day's garden complex. While this parcel does not currently have a formal

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<sup>98</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp (Director of Historic Preservation at the Lower Merion Conservancy), Interview with Author, April 11, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp (Director of Historic Preservation at the Lower Merion Conservancy), Interview with Author, April 11, 2019.

<sup>100</sup> Kathleen Abplanalp (Director of Historic Preservation at the Lower Merion Conservancy), Letter to the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners, March 29, 2019.



easement, she recognizes the property's significance and aims to convey the value to both the Township and the School Board. The current challenges facing properties associated with Stoneleigh, convey the threats of development and the vital importance of stronger preservation advocacy.



Figure 50- The Hare statue which symbolizes Otto Haas' children is located near the County Line Road and Spring Mill Road intersection. The red "Save Stoneleigh" sign indicates that the School Board's intentions were already in public news, as Stoneleigh opened to the public.



Figure 51- One of the “Save Stoneleigh” signs which drew attention to the estate’s potential taking.

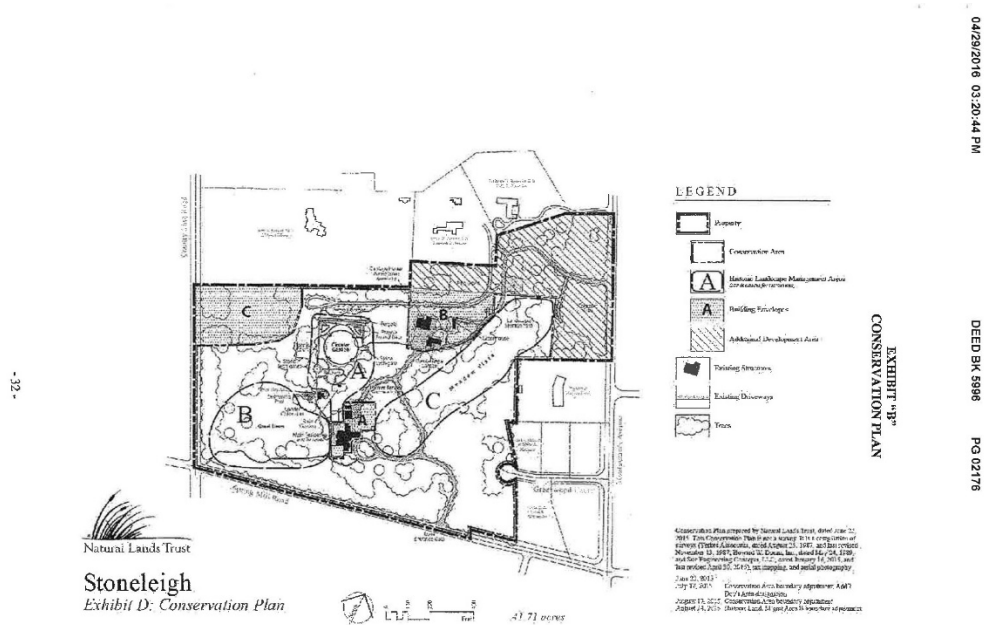


Figure 52- Conservation Plan, from Stoneleigh’s Conservation Easement which shows the estate’s potential development section.

## Case Study For Eminent Domain Issue

Before Stoneleigh's eminent domain case began, there was a comparable case in central Pennsylvania. Although the property in question has greater acreage, the case is similar to Stoneleigh's possible taking. The Cumberland Valley School District, eight miles west of Harrisburg, saw the McCormick Farm as a perfect location for a new school. Phyllis Zimmerman, a reporter for *The Sentinel*, describes, "On January 23, [2018], the school board approved a resolution authorizing the district to negotiate the purchase of a 116-acre lot at 31 Old Willow Mill Road bordering Carlisle Pike in Silver Spring Township."<sup>101</sup> In 1983, McCormick heirs worked with Natural Lands and placed a Conservation Easement on McCormick Farm, restricting the property only for agricultural use.<sup>102</sup> McCormick Farm has repeatedly been threatened by development proposals. The school district looked for new options as they realized several of their schools had almost reached capacity.<sup>103</sup> One option was the McCormick Farm. Since, this Farm is under a conservation easement it, should not be seen as

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<sup>101</sup> Phyllis Zimmerman, "Residents Protest Cumberland Valley School District's Acquisition Of Protected Land," *The Sentinel*, March 6, 2018, [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/residents-protest-cumberland-valley-school-district-s-acquisition-of-protected/article\\_532f56d6-37e6-5c0b-bc06-8d8d1312c0bb.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/residents-protest-cumberland-valley-school-district-s-acquisition-of-protected/article_532f56d6-37e6-5c0b-bc06-8d8d1312c0bb.html)

<sup>102</sup> Zimmerman, "Residents Protest Cumberland Valley School District's Acquisition"

<sup>103</sup> Phyllis Zimmerman, "Conservation Group Opposes CV's Move To Acquire Protected Land," *The Sentinel*, March 8, 2018, [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/conservation-group-opposes-cv-s-move-to-acquire-protected-land/article\\_1c34e98f-ffe6-5e72-8026-002083491db1.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/conservation-group-opposes-cv-s-move-to-acquire-protected-land/article_1c34e98f-ffe6-5e72-8026-002083491db1.html)

a viable option for a school. Similar to Stoneleigh, both of these properties are valued for their natural resources and scenic qualities.

McCormick Farm's Conservation Easement created several challenges for the Cumberland Valley School District. Unlike buying an empty lot, the school district could not simply develop the property. Zack Hoopes, another reporter for *The Sentinel*, explains, "Simply buying the farm, which is currently for sale by Lee's heirs, would not allow the district to build upon it. The only way to nullify the rights held by Natural Lands is via condemnation."<sup>104</sup> Condemning McCormick Farm would void the conservation easement and give the School District full control over this property. While this is one option, the School District would not be favorably viewed for its authoritarian stance. The Cumberland Valley School District did not intend to condemn the farmhouse or land directly around it but wanted to take 108 acres of the 116-acre property.<sup>105</sup> This proposal may sound like a compromise but was not a positive alternative. Building a new school on a majority of this property would greatly encroach on the panoramic views surrounding the farmhouse. Natural Lands, which monitors the easement for McCormick Farm, strongly opposed the School

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<sup>104</sup> Zack Hoopes. "Tough Row To Hoe: The Fight For McCormick Farm." *The Sentinel*, March 30, 2018. [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/closer\\_look/tough-row-to-hoe-the-fight-for-mccormick-farm/article\\_8890c06c-e425-59c1-94f1-c8461925686b.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/closer_look/tough-row-to-hoe-the-fight-for-mccormick-farm/article_8890c06c-e425-59c1-94f1-c8461925686b.html)

<sup>105</sup> Zack Hoopes, "CV Unveils McCormick Farm Plans During Crowded Information Session" *The Sentinel*, May 25, 2018. [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/cv-unveils-mccormick-farm-plans-during-crowded-information-session/article\\_eb068233-5973-50e9-9cfa-d78aca1a9bc2.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/cv-unveils-mccormick-farm-plans-during-crowded-information-session/article_eb068233-5973-50e9-9cfa-d78aca1a9bc2.html)

District's proposed plan for this property. Zimmerman describes, "Natural Lands...is ready for a fight... [Oliver Bass, (Former) Vice President Of Communications for Natural Lands describes,] "We are aware that the Cumberland Valley School District has voted to exercise eminent domain so that it may acquire the property for future use. We have retained legal counsel and intend to do everything in our power to protect the integrity of the easement."<sup>106</sup> Natural Lands fought to protect McCormick Farm as a natural resource and asset to the community. In both cases, Stoneleigh and McCormick Farm, Natural Lands defended the integrity of the conservation easements.

The passing of Bill #2468, not only aided Stoneleigh, but also greatly impacted the McCormick Farm. Since the farm also has a conservation easement, this new law mandated that the Cumberland Valley School District also needed to prove that no alternatives existed.<sup>107</sup> This law forced the School District to review its plans and consider other options. Public opposition from citizens and the county, meant that plans for taking a large portion of McCormick Farm were not favorable. A few days after Bill# 2468 passed, the Cumberland Valley School District dropped the McCormick case and filed to withdraw their taking.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Zimmerman, "Conservation Group Opposes CV's Move To Acquire Protected Land."

<sup>107</sup> Zack Hoopes. "Bill Could Impact CV's Eminent Domain Case For McCormick Farm." The Sentinel, June 22, 2018. [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/bill-could-impact-cv-s-eminent-domain-case-for-mccormick/article\\_879dd1f8-f47e-5dcb-b4be-3a70adaf75d9.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/bill-could-impact-cv-s-eminent-domain-case-for-mccormick/article_879dd1f8-f47e-5dcb-b4be-3a70adaf75d9.html)

<sup>108</sup> Zack Hoopes, "With Act 45 In Place, CV School District Will File To Drop McCormick Farm Case." The Sentinel, June 28, 2018. <https://cumberlink.com/news/local/with-act-45-in-place-cv-school-district-will-file-to-drop-mccormick-farm-case/>



Although the Lower Merion School Board did not completely drop Stoneleigh, when the bill was passed, the new law affected Lower Merion's proposed plans. Bill number 2468 will force school districts to more strategically plan where schools are built and will provide greater protection for properties with conservation easements.

➤ **Larger Problem Implied From The McCormick Farm Case Study**

Cumberland Valley School District's proposed plans for using the McCormick Farm as a new school do not consider prior tax increases or the best public benefit of the land. Schools do not require a large amount of land, and a new school could likely be constructed on a smaller parcel. When large scale changes are made which will affect the character of a community, the public's opinion should be considered. It is critical that the Cumberland Valley School District becomes aware of existing taxes and regulations which benefit open space. JL Brunner, a concerned resident quoted in *The Sentinel*, explains, "Several years ago, this township raised taxes to preserve our land. This land acquisition would be a slap in the face to all who voted for it."<sup>109</sup> Preservation of open space is significant for ensuring that every town does not become a victim of unfettered sprawl. The protection of Stoneleigh and McCormick Farm adds additional

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[in-place-cv-school-district-will-file-to/article\\_9df35918-fc2b-5c94-ad09-6a06b4bbdc16.html](https://www.in-place-cv-school-district-will-file-to/article_9df35918-fc2b-5c94-ad09-6a06b4bbdc16.html)

<sup>109</sup> Phyllis Zimmerman. "Residents Protest Cumberland Valley School District's Acquisition Of Protected Land."

natural resources and green space to their respected townships. Natural Lands defended McCormick Farm because the property's public benefit as an open space and environmental resource is more significant than building on it.<sup>110</sup> If part of McCormick Farm could be converted into nature trails, the public could develop a useful relationship with it as an active amenity. This would to retain its scenic and natural resources as well as serving members of the community.

The McCormick Farm case impacted landowners with conservation easements and Cumberland County as a whole. Cumberland County holds many conservation easements on over 18,000 acres of rural land and recognizes the significance of these agreements.<sup>111</sup> The county defended Natural Lands in the McCormick Farm case since they did not want to lose the trust of landowners or have the easements' value decrease. Although Cumberland County did not directly involve itself in this case, county commissioners feel a strong connection because of the many acres they have secured easements for in the past. If the School District had succeeded, people might have lost trust in the protection promised by conservation easements, and economic value of farmland. Easement agreements are not intended to be loosely applied but must be regarded and

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<sup>110</sup> Hoopes, "Tough Row To Hoe."

<sup>111</sup> Zack Hoopes, "Natural Lands Trust Files Legal Objections To Cumberland Valley Schools Taking McCormick Farm." *The Sentinel*, April 19, 2018. [https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/natural-lands-trust-files-legal-objections-to-cumberland-valley-schools/article\\_339f4b1a-2c65-5a8c-907c-db28ddde40b.html](https://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/mechanicsburg/natural-lands-trust-files-legal-objections-to-cumberland-valley-schools/article_339f4b1a-2c65-5a8c-907c-db28ddde40b.html)

defended in their entirety. Due to these long-term implications, Cumberland County, Silver Spring Township, and The State Department of Agriculture all opposed Cumberland Valley's proposed taking of McCormick Farm.<sup>112</sup> Each of these municipal entities recognized the greater benefits of preserving open space and believe that there are other alternatives. While the School District needs additional space for a new school, it must contemplate all aspects of a property, keeping in mind other solutions. Cumberland County has a fair claim to disagreeing with this case based on the 18,000 rural acres they have preserved during the past few decades. Both McCormick Farm and Stoneleigh will continue serving as environmental reserves within their respected townships, in part thanks to the diligent effort of Natural Lands, and concerned citizens.

### **Interpretive Themes**

Possible Interpretive themes presented in this section provide context for the historic, natural, and cultural resources at Stoneleigh. These themes include, the Pennsylvania Railroad history which led to the creation of the Main Line region, the importance of open space in built-up townships, the idea of Anglophilia, and the Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival architectural styles. Each of these themes provides greater meaning for understanding Stoneleigh's significance. The development of the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad was the reason for the construction of many large houses in the mid- to late

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<sup>112</sup> Hoopes, "CV Unveils McCormick Farm Plans During Crowded Information Session."

nineteenth century. The creation of the Main Line is a direct result of the Pennsylvania Railroad's success, building infrastructure to ease the movement of goods and people throughout the surrounding region. With increasing development in an already dense, suburban area, Stoneleigh as open space is important in this region. Stoneleigh remains one of the few Gilded Age residences which did not succumb to twentieth century development pressures. The property continues to face challenges as seen in the recent eminent domain case, and remaining threat to the adjacent Day garden complex. Stoneleigh's historical architecture and concepts of Anglophilia and the Tudor Revival Style set Stoneleigh apart from later and present construction. While some builders still construct structures with Tudor Revival elements today, most contemporary examples are less detailed and ornamented. The historic, natural, and cultural values that Stoneleigh embodies each contribute to the property's significance while also adding greater context and interpretive value for the site.

The Main Line refers to a section of the Pennsylvania Railroad that extended from Philadelphia to Paoli. This section of the railroad was developed as a means of expanding trade and passenger routes to areas west of Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Main Line's name is derived from the Main Line Public Works which was a railroad and canal system that extended from

Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, constructed from 1828 to 1834.<sup>113</sup> This network of canals and railroads eased travel between these two developed cities, at the east and west ends of the Main Line. The first part of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad ran eighty-two miles between the two towns and began operation in 1834, using horse-drawn wagons.<sup>114</sup> In 1836, trains officially replaced horse-drawn wagons on the railroad, providing a new mode of transportation.<sup>115</sup> The introduction of trains allowed passengers to travel faster from the Philadelphia suburbs to downtown.

Originally, the Main Line was a 40,000-acre tract settled by Welsh Quakers, who acquired the land from William Penn in 1681.<sup>116</sup> This area contained prime agricultural land. Railroad expansion spurred the creation of additional towns and prominent areas, which are still thought of as part of the Main Line. Three decades later, in the 1860s, Merion was able to advertise itself as an attractive suburb of Philadelphia.<sup>117</sup> The Main Line became a wealthy network of small towns with amenities for both summer and year-round residents. In the late 1860s, the Pennsylvania Railroad purchased farms in Humphreysville, developing an exclusive high-class residential community with

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<sup>113</sup> Jim Sundman, *Images Of Rail: Pennsylvania Main Line Railroad Stations: Philadelphia To Harrisburg* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Sundman, *Images Of Rail: Pennsylvania Main Line Railroad Stations*, 9.

<sup>115</sup> "The Philadelphia & Columbia Railway" *The Lower Merion Historical Society*. <http://www.lowermerionhistory.org/texts/first300/part08.html>

<sup>116</sup> Mark E. Dixon, *The Hidden History Of The Main Line*. (Charleston SC: The History Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>117</sup> Sundman, *Images Of Rail: Pennsylvania Main Line Railroad Stations*, 42.



a popular summer hotel.<sup>118</sup> The Pennsylvania Railroad renamed this town, Bryn Mawr. Centrally located along the Main Line, many people preferred spending summers in Bryn Mawr rather than in crowded Philadelphia.<sup>119</sup> Each of the towns developed as a result of the Pennsylvania Railroad's expansion provided upper-middle-class urban residents with a rural retreat and escape from the busy city. The Main Line expanded as more people saw the benefits of owning land, surrounded by clean air.

During the 1870s, the Pennsylvania Railroad required its executives to purchase land for their residences along the Main Line.<sup>120</sup> Due to the success of the Main Line, in 1877, Edmund Smith, the Pennsylvania Railroad's Vice President, considered buying land near Haverford Station; but thought it was too expensive, instead he purchased a large lot in Villanova.<sup>121</sup> His property later became Stoneleigh. During the twentieth century, many Main Line estates became victim to suburban developers' plans for denser housing. Visiting Stoneleigh allows visitors a glimpse into late nineteenth century history. Many of the towns along the Main Line are not boroughs or political entities but are areas named after their closest railroad stations.<sup>122</sup> Due to the boundaries of these locations, many of them are located within parts of different townships and are

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<sup>118</sup> *The Lower Merion Historical Society*, "The Philadelphia & Columbia Railway."

<sup>119</sup> J.W. Townsend, *The Old 'Main Line'*. (Philadelphia: Privately Printed, 1922), 58.

<sup>120</sup> Daughen and Binzen, *The Wreck Of The Penn Central*, 92.

<sup>121</sup> Townsend, *The Old 'Main Line'*, 78.

<sup>122</sup> Townsend, *The Old 'Main Line'*, 65.

split between Montgomery and Delaware Counties. The presence of these towns, and fine estates attracted many generations of Philadelphians who sought a suburban retreat near the city.

The need for open space is a driving force for preservation at Stoneleigh. To appreciate various benefits of open space, it is worth noting some history of the land preservation movement. As the United States' population grew, urban industrialization and pollution increased, in nineteenth century America, the land preservation movement gained momentum. The importance of the conservation movement is evidenced by the many protected national parks and areas under local and federal protection. By preserving natural areas, we benefit the current generation and enhance developed areas for future generations.

Richard Brewer, a biologist, explains, "Saving land so that its beauty can be enjoyed by us today and also by future generations is a powerful argument for many people. Although it has limitations, the aesthetic argument is probably the most persuasive argument a land trust can use for many of its land projects."<sup>123</sup>

Open space, provides scenic views and creates a calming atmosphere. Visitors to Stoneleigh gain a renewed appreciation for nature and the outdoors as they wander the vast greenspace. Brewer also believes open space is a human necessity which creates a diversion from peoples' busy lives.<sup>124</sup> Protected, natural

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<sup>123</sup> Richard Brewer, *Conservancy: The Land Trust Movement In America* (Hanover NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2004), 59.

<sup>124</sup> Brewer, *Conservancy*, 61.

areas provide open space for people to relax, exercise, and free their minds from life's preoccupations. Stoneleigh has only grown in popularity because of its open space and pleasant grounds as a public amenity.

While, land trust organizations often focus on large contiguous areas of open space, it is also important to think about open space in urban regions. Mark Tercek, the President and CEO of the Nature Conservancy, explains, "Nature is as important in a city as it is in wilderness- perhaps more so, since many cities are defined by an absence of nature. Our task is to make cities function more like natural landscapes."<sup>125</sup> By adding green space to urban regions, these areas become more attractive, and livable, in reference to quality of life, health and cleanliness. As regions preserve open space and create protected natural areas, neighboring properties become more attractive and their values rise.<sup>126</sup> Preservation of open space within developed places adds space for recreation and personal enjoyment while benefitting the urban environment, and economy. The addition of gardens and city parks in suburban and urban neighborhoods has the potential to improve air and water quality in these areas.<sup>127</sup> Stoneleigh's preserved landscape has acres of green space and naturalistic scenery that many people desire as they escape from busy urban streets. Walking Stoneleigh's

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<sup>125</sup> Mark R. Tercek and Jonathon S. Adams, *Nature's Fortune: How Business And Society Thrive By Investing In Nature* (Washington D.C: Island Press, 2015), 149.

<sup>126</sup> Brewer, *Conservancy*, 72.

<sup>127</sup> Tercek and Adams, *Nature's Fortune*, 152-153.

pathways allows time for reflection and awe in the presence of the large, historic trees. Preservation of Stoneleigh will ensure that future generations of Lower Merion Township residents will benefit from the opportunity to connect with themselves, the past, and nature in the local landscape.

Samuel Bodine built the second Stoneleigh house with a sense of Anglophilia and Tudor-Revival style. Edmund Smith constructed the first house in more of a Renaissance-Revival style. Anglophilia refers to the love or glorification of England. During the 1830s, many Americans gained pride in England and admired their sense of tradition. In 1838, Queen Victoria's coronation created an international sensation.<sup>128</sup> Americans' glorification of England alludes to their desire for a greater sense of the past. Americans admired England's sound political structure and many traditions. When Prince Albert Edward, Queen Victoria's son, visited the United States people of all nationalities took off work and parades were held in the Prince's honor.<sup>129</sup> This celebration is an example of extended pride and nationalism which did not relate to many people's inherited backgrounds. The American love of England links to their desire for a shared identity and culture. Harry Allen describes, "But the Americans' need for self-identification for 'belonging,' unquestionably finds an

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<sup>128</sup> Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion And Antebellum America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 30.

<sup>129</sup> Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion And Antebellum America*, 12. See Also: Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion And Antebellum America*, 16.

outlet in some feeling for the long English tradition.”<sup>130</sup> Stoneleigh’s grand interior alludes to the English sense of wealth and prosperity. Stoneleigh was built in the Tudor-Revival style with distinct English elements, which set it apart from a typical American-Tudor Revival home.

Stoneleigh is a high-quality example of a house built in the Tudor style. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, many architects looked to England for inspiration for new building styles. The name Tudor refers to the period when Henry VII ruled until the passing of Elizabeth I, which encompasses the years 1485 to 1603.<sup>131</sup> Many people admire this high-style period for its stories of kings, queens and construction of stately palaces. Historians often consider Tudor style houses as a symbol of English domestic life.<sup>132</sup> The Tudor style in North America integrates elements from late-Medieval and early Renaissance buildings, including steep roofs, asymmetrical facades, and half-timbered construction.<sup>133</sup> The Tudor- Revival Style was popular throughout the United States from 1890 to 1940.<sup>134</sup> Tudor architecture expanded to include simplified smaller houses as well as more complex high style examples. Stoneleigh is an example of a fine Tudor home since it was entirely

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<sup>130</sup> Harry Allen, “Anglophobia and Anglophilia,” in *American Studies In Transition*, ed. Marshall Fishwick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 216.

<sup>131</sup> Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law, *Tudoresque: In Pursuit of the Ideal Home*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 16.

<sup>132</sup> Ballantyne and Law, *Tudoresque*, 11.

<sup>133</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 10.

<sup>134</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, 449.



constructed of large stones, which were expensive and difficult to transport. During the early twentieth century, several architects built Cotswold- Tudor Revival homes in Philadelphia suburbs with thick masonry, no overhanging eaves or half-timbering.<sup>135</sup> Many simpler, less extravagant Tudor homes were built with stone first floors and stucco or shingle second stories, in an effort to save money.<sup>136</sup> It is fortunate, that Stoneleigh was not claimed by developers and is still celebrated today for its Tudor-Revival façade and interior.

Stoneleigh's exterior has many distinctive features of the Tudor Style, specifically its rusticated stone facades, and several pitched gables. The detailing and alignment of the gables along Stoneleigh's roof, classify the house's building style with the Tudor Parapeted Gable subtype (Figure 53). Gables in this subtype ascend to form a parapet, above the opposite roof.<sup>137</sup> An additional masonry border surrounds Stoneleigh's parapeted gables, topped with decorative finials (Figure 54). Two large parapeted gables punctuate the north, main façade, while the southern, prominent façade contains three parapeted gables. A parapeted gable extends over both of the western and eastern outer walls. The first gabled section on the east side encases a bay window on the second floor and the front door on the first floor (Figure 55). The second gable on the north side is much

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<sup>135</sup> Lee Goff, *Tudor Revival Homes In America From 1890 to Present* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2002), 94.

<sup>136</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, 452.

<sup>137</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, 450.

larger than the first and lies behind a one-story wing addition. Typical of the Tudor style, these parapeted cross-gables draw attention to both of the larger facades, while the front entrance is clearly delineated, with a large wooden door within an arched opening.<sup>138</sup> A rectangular quoined door surround with Classical and Tudor Revival details surrounds Stoneleigh's front entrance (Figure 56). Groups of leaded or wooden casement windows are also a distinct feature on many Tudor homes.<sup>139</sup> The majority of windows found throughout Stoneleigh are double hung. One distinct casement window on the southwest protruding bay has sets of diamond panes alluding to late Medieval and English Renaissance windows (Figure 57). Tudor homes in England were constructed with casement windows as double-hung windows were not yet created.<sup>140</sup> Due to elite Americans' sense of Anglophilia, many builders constructed American Tudor-Revival houses with a combination of both casement and double hung windows. Stoneleigh's large chimneys add a sense of charm and domesticity. These opposing structures emphasize the placement of the gables and pleasantly punctuate the space along the smooth, steep rooflines. Stoneleigh's rusticated, yet formal appearance sits comfortably in its sweeping great lawn, and open meadow.

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<sup>138</sup> Norman Tyler, Ted Ligibel and Ilene Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction To Its History, Principles And Practice*. Second Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton And Company, 2009), 86

<sup>139</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, 452.

<sup>140</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses*, 452.

Stoneleigh's interior alludes to Anglophilia, offering a sense of grandness, guarded in tradition. Samuel Bodine, Head of the Gas Improvement Company, built a grand Tudor Revival-Style stone house, the interiors displaying "Jacobethan," Neo Georgian, and Colonial Revival massing and decoration. Detailed carvings are along the front door's architrave, which include a Medieval-looking design directly above the front door (Figure 58 ). A stone Neo-Georgian arch with a keystone encases the front door. Across from the front door, in addition to the two perpendicular walls, are identical stone arches, capped with a keystone at the top (Figures 59-60) A small sitting room is to the left side of the entry, in which a stone fireplace with decorative pilasters creates the focal point of this room (Figure 61). Elevated wooden carvings with rectangular designs are above this fireplace. The first floor has four fireplaces, which clearly sets this residence apart from more modest homes. The central room on the first floor is open, with two separate seating areas, one at each of the large fireplaces. The east fireplace has stone surrounds, with raised, simplified stone carvings above this fixture (Figure 62 ). This fireplace is positioned left of a three-sided projecting bay wall. A grand stone fireplace is situated on the southwest wall of the central room (Figure 63). This fireplace is surrounded by pairs of carved wooden pilasters, and "Jacobethan," carved details above the mantel with raised panels. The ceiling in this south portion of the central room is ornamented with strapwork plaster decoration (Figure 64 ). West of the central

room lies the simpler dining room, which was added by Otto Haas in the 1936.<sup>141</sup> Sets of three-tiered sconces are spaced evenly along the walls. The south wall has a marble fireplace with a marble base (Figure 65). This is the only fireplace without ornamentation above the mantel, but the grey marble creates a stunning appearance, and is reminiscent of the Georgian style. Besides the dining room, the majority of the first floor is clad in oak-paneled walls, which are reminiscent of Neo-Gothic and Tudor Revival styles (Figure 66). While Stoneleigh's opulent interior has distinctive medieval qualities.



Figure 53- West façade, showing finials atop each of the parapeted gables, March 18, 2019.

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<sup>141</sup> William Morrison, *The Main Line: Country Houses of Philadelphia's Storied Suburb, 1870 – 1930* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2002), 21.





Figure 54- Large chimney with finial on the northwest bay, March 18, 2019.



Figure 55- East façade, with a rounded bay window, and rectangular arched front entrance, March 18, 2019.



Figure 56- Rectangular quoined door surround with square columns, surrounding Stoneleigh's double front doors, May 3, 2019.



Figure 57- Oriel diamond-lead casement window, located on Stoneleigh southwest bay, March 18, 2019.





Figure 58- Stone arch with pilasters and a detailed oak architrave around Stoneleigh's front door, March 18, 2019.



Figure 59- Stone arch to the right of the entry, looking north into the central room, and stair hall, March 18, 2019.



Figure 60- Stone arch with keystone, to the left of the entry, March 18, 2019.





Figure 61- Stone fireplace surround, with oak over mantel, in the small sitting room left of the entry, March 18, 2019.



Figure 62- Classicized stone fireplace on the east wall, of the Central Room, March 18, 2019.



Figure 63- Decorative carvings surrounding the “Jacobethan” fireplace on the southwest wall, in the Central Room, March 18, 2019.



Figure 64- Strapwork plaster ceiling with arabesques and Tudor roses on the beams in the west portion of the central room, March 18, 2019.



Figure 65- Neo-Georgian paneled walls and marble fireplace surround with sconces in the 1930's dining room, March 18, 2019.



Figure 66- Tudor Revival cast bronze sconce along the oak paneled wall in the east part of the central room, March 18, 2019.

### ➤ Idea of Cultural Landscapes

When thinking about the significance of built structures within natural and man-made landscapes, it is beneficial to connect with ideals of cultural landscapes. Thinking about cultural landscapes allow historians and preservationists to better see the bigger picture, when considering the value of the 'whole' place. Cultural landscapes are ever-changing areas impacted by human involvement but will never have a true permanent state.<sup>142</sup> A cultural landscape is a property that is shaped by man and nature from which human values can be understood. The complexities of cultural landscapes may sound as though this is an environmental element which cannot be preserved however these landscapes are studied and evaluated, which alludes to the point that they will never be completely preserved and are constantly evolving.<sup>143</sup> As natural areas constantly change with the seasons, their form and appearance adjust, but structurally these areas do not change as long as they are protected through preservation easements, the formation of parks or other measures. Cultural landscapes are often associated with historic sites, monuments or places with structures tied to their overall significance. Due to cultural landscapes' human and natural elements, historians view these expanses as an area for opportunity,

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<sup>142</sup> Nancy Rottle, "A Continuum And Process Framework For Rural Historic Landscape Preservation" in *Balancing Nature And Heritage In Preservation Practice: Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Richard Longstreth. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 138.

<sup>143</sup> Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, ed. *Preserving Cultural Landscapes In America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.



and collaboration.<sup>144</sup> Historians and preservationists study cultural landscapes to understand them and determine which elements are the most significant.

Cultural landscapes provide an access point for understanding layers of history and significance at particular sites. It is worth thinking about cultural landscape types in order to see how this concept connects with Stoneleigh.

Cultural landscapes are made up of layers of human and natural interventions. In order to grasp the significance and scope of a cultural landscape, it is necessary to reflect on how these places formed.<sup>145</sup> The elements of a cultural landscape represent evolving values. Further, cultural landscapes are better understood and appreciated as visitors participate in and spend time within these places.<sup>146</sup> Fully comprehending a site's importance will allow people to understand the need for a site's future protection and its apparent, intrinsic values. The appeal of historic landscapes is their ongoing evolution and ability to shape part of our world.<sup>147</sup> The attraction of cultural landscapes is their combination of both cultural and natural values revealed in layers of history. This idea of layers relates to the different landscape architects who each

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<sup>144</sup> Robert Melnick, "Considering Nature And Culture In Historic Landscape Preservation," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes In America*, ed. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>145</sup> Melnick, "Considering Nature And Culture In Historic Landscape Preservation," 35.

<sup>146</sup> Melnick, "Considering Nature And Culture In Historic Landscape Preservation," 39-40.

<sup>147</sup> Julie Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation As Cultural Geography" in *Balancing Nature And Heritage In Preservation Practice: Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Richard Longstreth. (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2008), 29.

impacted Stoneleigh over time and created distinctive features, some of which survive in an evolved form. Today's Stoneleigh remains as a living artifact within a changing landscape and preserved house.

The significance of cultural landscapes, similar to the value of historic sites, directly relates to the site's integrity. According to Catherine Howett, a historian, a property's integrity is its ability to express its significance.<sup>148</sup> Integrity connects a property's ability to convey its historic appearance and cultural value. In assessing any historic property or landscape it is crucial to consider changes that have occurred in addition to how the site developed and maintained its significance over time. Since natural and cultural landscapes are constantly changing, historians carefully consider the historic aspects of such places. Catherine Howett, a historian, describes, "The National Park Service understands...that integrity is the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period."<sup>149</sup> All cultural landscapes and natural areas have specific inherent values which make them unique and worth protecting. By evaluating each component of a cultural landscape, its significance may become apparent. Since cultural landscapes are constantly changing, these places cannot

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<sup>148</sup> Catherine Howett, "Integrity As A Value In Cultural Landscape Preservation," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes In America*, ed. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 188.

<sup>149</sup> Howett, "Integrity As A Value In Cultural Landscape Preservation," 189.

be constrained to just one period of significance, but rather a continuous range which includes the present period.<sup>150</sup> By considering various periods of significance, each relating to the site's value, historians can then evaluate the whole site, not a single piece of it. When people are forced to define a period of significance, they often limit themselves to focusing on one piece of information that gains importance or critical attention. Cultural landscapes are important because they connect multiple time periods and events. Stoneleigh's landscape has been maintained differently due to the interests of particular owners, but overall it maintains the same appearance. When evaluating Stoneleigh's present landscape, one must consider the whole property and how its evolution over time.

Understanding Stoneleigh as a cultural landscape places the significance on the house, the landscape and the full timeline of the property. Stoneleigh is not only significant for the period when landscape plans were created, but for each of the different landscape designs which were created on the property. Evaluating Stoneleigh with this approach provides a weighted look at both the historic structures and historic landscape features. Stoneleigh's pergola dates from an early period and complements later landscape plans. Historians, Norman Tyler, Ted Ligibel and Ilene Tyler, explain, "Historic landscapes present

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<sup>150</sup> Rottle, "A Continuum And Process Framework For Rural Historic Landscape Preservation," 136.

one of the most intriguing and difficult types of preservation. Buildings remain relatively static in their form, whereas natural elements like trees and shrubs change with each growing season.”<sup>151</sup> As Stoneleigh’s landscape evolved with designs and influences from several landscape architects as well as the changing seasons, the house remained a constant presence, despite later alterations. Stoneleigh’s large stone carriage house is also an historic structure, with its symmetrical bays and impressive size. Historic landscapes serve as teaching devices, when visitors see them as living artifacts.<sup>152</sup> Stoneleigh’s landscape creates an artifact of the past with designs that link to different landscape architects and features from the site’s history. The landscape, types of trees, plants, and physical structures each contribute to Stoneleigh’s overall significance. Large trees, which have had a presence on the historic property for many years, define the site’s character and setting.<sup>153</sup> Stoneleigh has a significant collection of unusual, large, grand trees which contribute to the property’s natural feel. These trees are recognized as historical specimens, adding value to the property’s naturalistic aesthetic. Stoneleigh is a developed and evolving

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<sup>151</sup> Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 325.

<sup>152</sup> Bruce Teeple, “Straight Talk About Historic Structures and Landscapes,” in *The Small Museum Toolkit, Book 6: Stewardship, Collections And Historic Preservation*. (Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>153</sup> Rebecca Crew, “Tree Preservation And The Cultural Effects Of Climate Change” in *Sustainability And Historic Preservation: Toward A Holistic View*. (Newark: University Of Delaware Press, 2011), 6.



cultural landscape with distinct historic connections that are parallel to the inhabitation of the specific owners.

### **Best Practices**

#### **➤ Need For A Balance Between Historic And Land Preservation**

As Stoneleigh's house and its open landscape convey equal significance to the property, both architectural and landscape features are vital for future preservation. The property's landscape cannot be separated from the house. The house and landscape complement each other. Historic structures each influence historic and current landscape plans. A property's natural elements, and surrounding layout will provide direct clues to previous uses.

Understanding the historic and more recent uses relates to the house's orientation in the landscape and significance of the whole property. Throughout its history, Stoneleigh had two entrances. The main driveway and formal entrance for the property is along Spring Mill Road. The driveway loops to the left and forms a circle in front of the house's north façade. The service entrance is off of Montgomery Avenue. This driveway bends left to the carriage-house, then connects with main driveway. Use of the whole property demonstrates the purpose for these two entrances, who would have used them and why they were separate (Figure 67) Clearly the property is not complete without the main house. Thinking about the historic house in connection with events that took place on the property, and how the landscape was formed, will provide

understanding of past uses.<sup>154</sup> Robert Melnick, a prominent landscape architecture historian, describes, “I am impatient with those who cannot see that landscape- the landscape around us, the landscape we have all shaped, the landscape we inhabit- is every bit as important as the architecture, archaeology, artifacts and associations that we cherish.”<sup>155</sup> This passage aptly signifies the need for stronger connections when planning for the future of open spaces and historic buildings. Stoneleigh’s landscape was crafted around the main house, and the orientation directly links to the house. The historic house should not be thought of as a back-drop, but as an active element within the site.



Figure- 67 Current map of Stoneleigh, highlighting existing landscape and built features in addition to the separate entrances.

<sup>154</sup> Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 15.

<sup>155</sup> Robert Melnick, “Are We There Yet?: Travels And Tribulations In The Cultural Landscape” in *Balancing Nature And Heritage In Preservation Practice: Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Richard Longstreth. (Minneapolis: University OF Minnesota Press, 2008), 199-200.

There is an apparent weakness in considering the preservation of the house and landscape separately. It is critical to tie together land and historic preservation fields. Land and historic architectural preservation fields share similar goals and missions, but they often operate in detached ways. Previously mentioned, Natural Lands owns Stoneleigh, the Lower Merion Conservancy monitors the property's Conservation Easement and the Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia oversees the Building Façade Easement. Each of these groups work separately, achieving their own objectives. Some organizations recognize and aim to preserve both land and historic buildings, but these organizations are in the minority. A few examples of companies which plan for the preservation of both buildings and open space include the Land Conservancy For Southern Chester County, the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Heritage Conservancy and the Lower Merion Conservancy. Since its creation, the British National Trust seeks to protect the preservation of countryside and buildings.<sup>156</sup> While this combination of goals would be a novel idea in the United States, it is critical that both historians and preservationists see value in preserving both historic structures and open space. If Stoneleigh's house had been torn down, the property would not have the same appeal, or historic clarity.

Preservationists who specialize in both historic or land preservation

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<sup>156</sup> Richard Wagner, 'Finding A Seat At The Table: Preservation And Sustainability' in *Sustainability And Historic Preservation: Toward A Holistic View*, ed. Richard Longstreth (Newark: University Of Delaware Press, 2011), 6.

would greatly benefit from collaborative efforts, even if they have trouble seeing the big picture. According to the National Park Service, “Conservation is generally associated with the protection of natural resources, while preservation is associated with the protection of buildings, objects and landscapes.”<sup>157</sup> The overlap between these two fields is evident through their use of similar terms, and protection of historic resources. Historic preservationists may be involved with the creation of national monuments, historic site and national parks, but they do not typically authorize conservation easements. The American preservation movement was originally started in an effort to protect significant historic sites associated with George Washington, with the founding of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1853.<sup>158</sup> As people began to recognize the added value of buildings, separate groups formed to preserve and protect these structures. As development rapidly increased during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, environmental groups formed to protect significant natural areas throughout the United States. Two examples from the early environmental movement are Yellowstone National Park which the government designated in 1872 and the first land trust, the Trustees of Reservations formed in

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<sup>157</sup> Michele Valerie Cloonan, *The Monumental Challenge Of Preservation: The Past In A Volatile World* (Cambridge MA: The Massachusetts Institute Of Technology Press, 2018), 167.

<sup>158</sup> William Murtaugh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation In America* Revised Edition. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 28.

1891.<sup>159</sup> In an effort to create a lasting presence of the past for future generations, historic and land preservation groups can benefit from working collaboratively and have more shared goals.

A greater connection between historic and land preservation would put both fields in a stronger position to confront future development. Stoneleigh's eminent domain problem is one of increased growth and density in Lower Merion Township which led to the need for a new school. Changing cultural landscapes constantly evolve in spite of and because of human involvement. While historic and land preservation largely operate separately, there is reasonable evidence to support the benefit of a cohesive union. Michael Tomlan, Director of Cornell's Department of Historic Preservation, explains, "In theory, there should be a union [between the conservation of natural resources and preservation of our built environment]. In fact, however, ample evidence demonstrates that, while both movements begin with the idea of protection, for preservationists the preferred alternative is the continued use of the resource, while for conservationists this is less than a desirable choice."<sup>160</sup> In both preservation realms, the goal is to protect and preserve a resource for the enjoyment of future generations. Land preservation easements either prohibit

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<sup>159</sup> Brewer, *Conservancy*, 20, 22.

<sup>160</sup> Michael Tomlan, "Preservation Practice Comes Of Age" in *Past Meets Future: Saving America's Historic Environments*, ed. Antoinette Lee (Washington D.C: National Trust For Historic Preservation, The Preservation Press, 1992), 76.



continued use of a resource or provide public space within a network of trails. Conservation and façade easements prevent deconstruction or development of the heritage property. Collaboration and shared networking between historic and land preservation organizations will enhance civic activism for the preservation field and advance the preservation movement for future generations.

As preservationists contemplate the future generations, it will be vital to consider how places are chosen for added protection and what new preservation measures will prove to be the best tools for an individual job. Luckily, the preservation of Stoneleigh was largely secured through the creation of Bill 2468. This law provided added protection for properties with conservation easements, in cases of potential eminent domain situations. When historic properties become pawns in development schemes, future generations lose key cultural resources. If properties exhibit natural and historic value, more careful planning should go into the planning for these resources. Shortly after Stoneleigh opened as a public site many people began visiting the property and enjoying the site for its intrinsic beauty. Although, Stoneleigh butts up against Villanova University, the property presents a special rural enclave, amid a bustling suburb. Richard Longstreth, an avid historian, explains, “We cannot replicate what we have lost, but we can reverse the tide and take the steps necessary to conserve a much larger and richer

spectrum of our environment then we have in the past.”<sup>161</sup> Longstreth’s use of the word ‘environment’, encompasses both structures and natural settings. While today’s historians and preservationists believe in the importance of both types of resources, the current tools are not strong enough to protect them, from determined developers. Preservation must progress so that more people appreciate the balance of development and preservation. The more we value preservation, people will place greater significance on the built and natural environment. If taken for granted, historic and natural environments disappear and are damaged. Both must be protected so that future generations have the opportunity to experience these cultural landscapes in balance. Both natural and historic places provide a chance for exploration, and education.<sup>162</sup> Collaboration of historic and land preservation offers the possibility for new and stronger legislation, and the opportunity of a sustainable future for historic properties, and natural landscapes. People and properties throughout the United States can benefit from building strong connections and making new legislation at the local, state and national levels to strengthen all preservation.

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<sup>161</sup> Richard Longstreth, “On The Road Again: Preservation’s Urgent Future” in *Sustainability And Historic Preservation: Toward A Holistic View*, ed. Richard Longstreth (Newark: University Of Delaware Press, 2011), 119.

<sup>162</sup> W. Brown Morton III, “Forging New Values in Uncommon Times” in *Past Meets Future: Saving America’s Historic Environments*, ed. Antoinette Lee (Washington D.C: National Trust For Historic Preservation, The Preservation Press, 1992), 40.

### ➤ Value Of The Historic House

Stoneleigh holds sentimental value for descendants of different owners, and visual links to the past for the property's visitors. Stoneleigh's stone exterior and wood-paneled interior place it in a class of monumental homes built for wealthy businessmen or famous political figures. Stoneleigh and other historic houses offer a visual representation of historic revival styles, taste, details, and technology from earlier times.<sup>163</sup> The intricate details throughout carvings above the fireplaces and in the ceiling of the great room are examples of fine craftsmanship seldom employed in homes built today. Historic houses showcase historic architecture, architectural methods, and often employ a combination of styles. Stoneleigh is significant since it is one of the few residences left from the time it was constructed. Historic houses are valuable resources since they connect us to the past and allow visitors to gain an understanding of both site specific and broader historical narratives.<sup>164</sup> While, Stoneleigh's historic architecture alone is worth celebrating, embedded in the property are layers of history within the house and landscape.

Stoneleigh's long history and various owners, the house would allow for increased interpretation of past residents. Visitors to Stoneleigh have the option to reserve tours of reserving tours in advance, and more events are planned

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<sup>163</sup> Neil W. Horstman, "New Dimensions For House Museums" in *Past Meets Future: Saving America's Historic Environments*, ed. Antoinette Lee (Washington D.C: National Trust For Historic Preservation, The Preservation Press, 1992), 168.

<sup>164</sup> Horstman, "New Dimensions For House Museums," 168-169.

which will utilize the house within the landscape. Many house museums structure visitors' experience of rooms with barriers. In these situations, visitors may have a difficult time imagining spatial flow and the historic house serving as a residence, separate from a museum. Stoneleigh has the feel of a welcoming, grand home. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century paintings, many by Cassatt, in addition to other American and European Impressionist artists grace the walls. Historic house museums often aim to interpret the lives of particular owners and convey significant periods of time.<sup>165</sup> Each of Stoneleigh's owners each made specific contributions to the Philadelphia region. By describing their stories in connection with the development of the grounds, the property will gain a relatable, human presence. Historic houses offer the opportunity of portraying distinct periods of history through architectural elements, physical objects, and stories of different owners. Through the preservation and interpretation of Stoneleigh, the house can serve as a critical resource which interpret the history of the Main Line, fashions in landscape and garden design, and influences of the Haas family.<sup>166</sup> Increased use of the Stoneleigh house for tours and events will strengthen Stoneleigh's appeal throughout the surrounding community.

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<sup>165</sup> Karen Zukowski, "The Importance Of Context," in *Conservation In Context: Finding A Balance For The Historic House Museum* (Washington D.C: National Trust For Historic Preservation, 1995), 8.

<sup>166</sup> Zukowski, "The Importance Of Context," 15.

The preservation of Stoneleigh as well as other historic houses provides a valuable look to the past, and a visual connection with previous generations. Upon entering many historic houses, visitors feel a powerful sensation of stepping back in time and escaping reality.<sup>167</sup> Visitors to Stoneleigh instantly gain a sense of formality, and appreciation for the application of simple materials in a decorative manner. Neil Horstman, previous president of the White House Historical Association, describes, "Historic house museums are benchmarks of the past-physical remnants of the country's growth and development. They tell us what words cannot. They are three-dimensional textbooks of our history."<sup>168</sup> Historic houses convey a wealth of knowledge and architectural innovations. Stoneleigh is no exception, this great house is not just a structure on the great lawn, but a well-preserved link with the past.

➤ **Future Preservation Of Stoneleigh**

Considering the current detachment of most historic and land preservation organizations, it is critical to think about how Stoneleigh will be preserved in the future. Stoneleigh is owned and operated by Natural Lands, a land trust that does not regularly operate historic houses. Will this property look the same in fifty years? Although the conservation and façade easements protect the property, will future directors value the house? Oliver Bass, Natural Lands'

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<sup>167</sup> Zukowski, "The Importance Of Context," 15.

<sup>168</sup> Horstman, "New Dimensions For House Museums," 167.



new president sees the house as the focal point of the property and does not believe it will suffer neglect.<sup>169</sup> Continued interpretation and attention to the house will ensure that the house remains in good condition and is appreciated into the future. Bass believes there could be great potential in working with the Organ Historical Society for arts related events.<sup>170</sup> Stoneleigh has started offering guided house and garden tours once a month which provide a special opportunity for guests to experience all aspects of the property. Typically, the Stoneleigh grounds are open Tuesday through Sunday while, the house is open for reserved tours three of those days. Ethan Kauffman, Stoneleigh's new director, believes there will be greater integration with the house in the future, including more events which will utilize the house.<sup>171</sup> Kauffman brings new perspectives and ideas for continued maintenance and appreciation of Stoneleigh. Stoneleigh is the only property owned by Natural Lands with its own director. The Haas family left Stoneleigh with an endowment fund which greatly supports the property.<sup>172</sup> Tours generate revenue and people are also able to give donations directly toward Stoneleigh. Natural Lands completed an eighty-year Capital Plan which evaluates the lifespan of different elements on the property including the buildings.<sup>173</sup> This plan allows staff members to determine the

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<sup>169</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>170</sup> Oliver Bass (President of Natural Lands), Interview with Author, February 21, 2019.

<sup>171</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>172</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

<sup>173</sup> Ethan Kauffman (Director Of Stoneleigh), Interview with Author, March 18, 2019.

service life of different mechanical systems, and other elements of the physical structures. Continued care of and attention to the historic house will ensure its perpetual preservation, and appeal within the growing township.

➤ **Comparable Historic Site: Ladew Topiary Gardens**

Ladew Topiary Gardens is an historic estate, celebrated for its gardens and historic structures, located in Monkton, Maryland (Figures 68-69). The two hundred plus acre estate includes a twenty-two-acre themed garden and a nature trail, about forty minutes north of Baltimore and two hours southwest of Philadelphia. Harvey Ladew, owner and designer, created each of the themed gardens which display specific types of flowers or color and over one hundred topiaries, during the late 1930s.<sup>174</sup> Gardeners and staff at Ladew work tirelessly to maintain Mr. Ladew's visions and designs. Although, Stoneleigh conveys many different layers and a simpler plan than in earlier designs, both of these estates serve as peaceful retreats from busy everyday life. Ladew's Manor House was originally built during the late 1700s, and Mr. Ladew built a large addition in the 1930s which relates to the historic architecture.<sup>175</sup> Ladew has a Conservation Easement with the Maryland Historical Trust, which includes the

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<sup>174</sup> "History of the Gardens" Ladew Topiary Gardens.

<https://www.ladewgardens.com/HOUSE-GARDENS-NATURE-WALK/Gardens>

<sup>175</sup> "Mansion House- History" Ladew Topiary Gardens.

<https://www.ladewgardens.com/Manor-House>

Gardens, Manor House, Barn, Gardener's Cottage, and parking lot.<sup>176</sup>

Fortunately, Ladew is surrounded on three sides by Elkridge Harford hunt country, most of which is under conservation easements with local organizations. This estate is located in a rural part of Harford County which is near the rapidly expanding town of Bel Air. Ladew's conservation easement will provide the property with protection in perpetuity. This easement is significant since it will outweigh potential development threats to this estate. In Stoneleigh's case, the School Board attempted to ignore the property's easements and instigate a taking through Eminent Domain. With greater appeal of these natural enclaves, conservation easements will maintain the protection which they were designed to embody, and these properties will be celebrated forever. Both Stoneleigh and Ladew are able to serve a wide audience, due to the careful maintenance from their staff and the easements in place.

Ladew Gardens staff actively plans for meeting future needs for the site, which include managing various maintenance projects and planning new events suitable for varied groups. The site keeps a Master List for Facilities that records all regular maintenance needs and plans for larger capital improvement projects.<sup>177</sup> Emily Emerick, Ladew's Executive Director, recognizes the

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<sup>176</sup> Emily Emerick (Executive Director of Ladew Topiary Gardens), Interview With Author, April 18, 2019.

<sup>177</sup> Emily Emerick (Executive Director of Ladew Topiary Gardens), Interview With Author, April 18, 2019.

importance of planning for the preservation of both the grounds and each of the historic buildings. Ladew staff prioritize projects for the house and gardens with a strong focus on archival documents, to ensure that they stay true to Mr. Ladew's designs.<sup>178</sup> While staff and gardeners have added many new amenities over the years, their intention is to preserve the historic architecture and existing design of the property. Ladew provides several attractions for visitors including the new Butterfly House, Manor House, Nature Walk, and the gardens. Each of these aspects enhance the property, providing additional attractions and reasons for visitors to enjoy the estate. Emily Emerick believes the Manor House appeals to a portion of visitors and portrays the history of the property.<sup>179</sup> Ladew offers daily tours of the house and the gardens are open for a small fee. In addition to regular tours, Ladew offers eighty events, including a Garden Festival, a Spring and Fall Lecture Series, Children's Day, Summer Concerts, and Christmas Open House.<sup>180</sup> Each of these events broadens this estate's visitor, member and donor base. Stoneleigh has the potential of creating new interpretation within the house and adding varied events connected with the estate's history and local interests. It is critical to think about new ways to draw people to these sites, without

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<sup>178</sup> Emily Emerick (Executive Director of Ladew Topiary Gardens), Interview With Author, April 18, 2019.

<sup>179</sup> Emily Emerick (Executive Director of Ladew Topiary Gardens), Interview With Author, April 18, 2019.

<sup>180</sup> "History of Ladew." Ladew Topiary Gardens.

<https://www.ladewgardens.com/ABOUT-LADEW/History-of-Ladew>

drastically changing the layouts or designs of these estates. Both Stoneleigh and Ladew are celebrated for their existing landscape features and historic structures which are protected in perpetuity.



Figure 68- Ladew Topiary Gardens, Monkton, MD.



Figure 69- Ladew Topiary Gardens, looking toward the house.



## Conclusion

Stoneleigh's history, preservation challenges, historic house, and landscaped grounds provide a strong example for the importance of balancing both historic and land preservation. Thankfully, the Lower Merion School Board stopped pursuing the Haas-owned portion of Stoneleigh, and this property now remains protected forever. Both the conservation and façade easements are binding to the property, prohibiting major changes and development. Natural Lands' investment in Stoneleigh provides a sense of security, due to their conservation accomplishments, strong leadership, and interest in the property.

Greater interpretation of Stoneleigh's history in the context of the Main Line, Edmund Smith, Samuel Bodine, and the Haas family will greatly deepen understanding and raise awareness at the property. Communicating and interpreting the history of the property will convey how the property changed and remained the same. Stoneleigh has many English-inspired architectural and landscape design elements, including the lychgates, its overall Tudor-Revival exterior decoration, and many carvings on the interior.

Recognizing Stoneleigh as a cultural landscape, allows for layered periods of significance, and encompasses the whole property, not just one section. With continued population increases, preservationists need to be vigilant and wise about preserving all aspects from our past. Due to development pressures, preservationists on local and state levels need to increase and strengthen the

current laws for protecting historic properties. Land trusts often have a higher degree of success throughout the country, while historic buildings are often torn down when people are unwilling to repurpose them. Historic buildings offer a visual story of the past through architectural details, history of the building, and people associated with it. Buildings are often the best links with understanding the past.

Natural areas and planned landscapes are worth preserving to protect animal habitats and maintain open space for human enjoyment. Historic and land preservation organizations preserve both significant places and everyday locations which would be forgotten if not saved. The preservation of Stoneleigh was a huge success for both the Haas family and Natural Lands. Stoneleigh remains a peaceful enclave with its Tudor-Revival house and beautifully landscaped grounds, protected in perpetuity.

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**Figure 1:** Philadelphia & Columbia Railroad Map:

<http://lowermerionhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Plan-Showing-Location-of-Philadelphia-and-Columbia-Railroad.jpg>

**Figure 2:** Original Stoneleigh House:

William Morrison, *The Main Line: Country Houses of Philadelphia's Storied Suburb, 1870-1930*. (New York: Acanthus Press, 2002), 20.

**Figure 3-** Second Stoneleigh House:

Samuel Bodine Family, "Photos of Stoneleigh" Circa 1913. Lower Merion Historical Society.

**Figure 4:** *Atlas of Bryn Mawr and Vicinity Map*, From 1881:

G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Bryn Mawr and Vicinity or of Properties Along the Pennsylvania Railroad: Including 1 ½ Miles Each Side of the Road and From the City Line to Malvern Station*. (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1881), Plate 16.

**Figure 5:** *Atlas of Properties Along the Pennsylvania Railroad*, From 1887:

G. William Baist, *Atlas of Properties Along the Pennsylvania Railroad: Embracing Two Miles Each Side of the Road and From Overbrook to Malvern Station*. (Philadelphia: J.L. Smith, 1887), Plate 18.

**Figure 6:** *Atlas of Properties Along the Pennsylvania Railroad*, From 1887: [Zoomed In Map]

G. William Baist, *Atlas of Properties Along the Pennsylvania Railroad: Embracing Two Miles Each Side of the Road and From Overbrook to Malvern Station*. (Philadelphia: J.L. Smith, 1887), Plate 18.

**Figure 7:** *Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County*, From 1896:

Ellis Kiser and C.A. Potts, *Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County, and Overbrook Farms, Wynnefield, & Overbrook Impr. Co.* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1896), Plate 12.

**Figure 8:** *Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County*, From 1896: [Zoomed in map]

Ellis Kiser and C.A. Potts, *Atlas of Lower Merion, Montgomery County, Including Part of Delaware County, and Overbrook Farms, Wynnefield, & Overbrook Impr. Co.* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1896), Plate 12.

**Figure 9:** *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, From 1908:*  
Ellis Kiser, *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad From Overbrook to Paoli* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1908), Plate 21.

**Figure 10:** *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, From 1908:* [Zoomed in map]:  
Ellis Kiser, *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad From Overbrook to Paoli* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1908), Plate 21.

**Figure 11:** *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1913:*  
Ellis Kiser and J.M. Lathrop, *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad From Overbrook to Paoli: Embracing Lower Merion, Haverford, and Radnor Townships and Parts of Upper Merion, Easttown, and Tredyffrin Townships* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1913), Plate 24.

**Figure 12:** *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad, 1913:* [Zoomed in map]:  
Ellis Kiser and J.M. Lathrop, *Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad From Overbrook to Paoli: Embracing Lower Merion, Haverford, and Radnor Townships and Parts of Upper Merion, Easttown, and Tredyffrin Townships* (Philadelphia: A.H. Mueller, 1913), Plate 24.

**Figure 13:** *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1937:*  
*Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania: Including the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth in Montgomery County and the Townships of Haverford and Radnor in Delaware County* (Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Company, 1937), Plate 23.

**Figure 14:** *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1937:* [Zoomed in map]:  
*Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania: Including the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth in Montgomery County and the Townships of Haverford and Radnor in Delaware County* (Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Company, 1937), Plate 23.

**Figure 15:** *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1948:*  
*Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania: Including the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth in Montgomery County, and the Townships of Haverford and Radnor in Delaware County* (Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Company, 1948), Plate 18.

**Figure 16:** *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1948:*  
*Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania: Including the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth in Montgomery County, and the Townships of Haverford and Radnor in Delaware County* (Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Company, 1948), Plate 18.

**Figure 17:** Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania, 1961:  
*Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania: Including the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth in Montgomery County, and the Townships of Haverford and Radnor in Delaware County* (Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Company, 1961), Plate 19.

**Figure 18:** Formal Hedged Path, Circa 1901:  
Samuel Bodine Family. "Photos of Stoneleigh" Circa 1913. Lower Merion Historical Society

**Figure 19:** Hedged Forecourt, Circa 1901:  
Samuel Bodine Family. "Photos of Stoneleigh" Circa 1913. Lower Merion Historical Society

**Figure 20:** Circle Garden, Circa 1901  
Samuel Bodine Family. "Photos of Stoneleigh" Circa 1913. Lower Merion Historical Society

**Figure 21:** Circle Garden, Circa 1901 [Zoomed out view]  
Samuel Bodine Family. "Photos of Stoneleigh" Circa 1913. Lower Merion Historical Society

**Figure 22:** Olmsted 1909 Plan For Stoneleigh:  
Olmsted Brothers, "Sketch For Grounds About The House" July 7, 1909. Olmsted Archives.  
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**Figure 23:** Rockery Garden:  
"Rockery" Olmsted Archives. 1920.  
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Percival Gallagher, "Circle Garden" Olmsted Archives. December 1920,  
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**Figure 25-** Circle Garden, 1958:  
Mr. Hudak, "Panorama of Formal Garden Facing West" Olmsted Archives. June 13, 1958. [https://www.flickr.com/photos/olmsted\\_archives/15070808490/in/album-72157647622519516/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/olmsted_archives/15070808490/in/album-72157647622519516/)

**Figures 26 and 27-** Historic trees along the northwest part of the property:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.



**Figure 28-** Great Lawn with Stoneleigh's western façade:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 29-** Stoneleigh's eastern façade, from the meadow:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 30-** Stoneleigh's meadow:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 31-** Flowering tree, along curved driveway to the Carriage House:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 32-** Stoneleigh Carriage House with stone wall in front:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 33-** Stoneleigh Carriage House:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 34-** East façade of the Stoneleigh Carriage House:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 35-** Extant Greenhouse:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 36-** Arbor in Rockery Garden, looking west:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 37-** Arbor in Rockery Garden, looking east:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 38-** Rockery Garden, looking south:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 39-** Rockery Garden, looking north:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 40-** Circle Garden, looking north:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 41-** Panorama of Circle Garden:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 42-** Pergola:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 43-** Looking north through pergola:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 44-** Gate in west end of pergola:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 45-** Flowering Trees with large planter:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 46-** Historic Lychgate, near northwest part of property:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019.

**Figure 47-** Bay window with decorative carvings on Stoneleigh's south wing:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 48-** Bay window with decorative carvings on Stoneleigh's northeast wing:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 49-** Example of an historic lychgate at Church of St. Margaret, Great Britain:  
<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2805663>

**Figure 50-** Stoneleigh Hare Statue with "Save Stoneleigh" sign:  
[https://chestercountyrablins.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/dsc\\_45581.jpg](https://chestercountyrablins.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/dsc_45581.jpg)

**Figure 51-** "Save Stoneleigh" sign:  
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Df3FtjXW4AE1jQm.jpg>

**Page 52-** Stoneleigh's Conservation Plan:  
"Conservation Easement For 330 Spring Mill Road," Filed With the Montgomery County, Pennsylvania Recorder Of Deeds. Recorded April 29, 2016. Book 5996, Page 2176

**Figure 53-** Stoneleigh's west façade, showing finials atop the gables:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 54-** Large chimney with finial on Stoneleigh's northwest bay:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 55-** Stoneleigh's east façade with front entrance:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 56-** Stoneleigh's rectangular entrance:  
Photographed by author, May 3, 2019

**Figure 57-** One of Stoneleigh's casement windows:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 58-** Arch with pilasters inside Stoneleigh's front door:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 59-** Arch to the right of Stoneleigh's front door:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 60-** Arch to the left of Stoneleigh's front door:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 61-** Stone fireplace in Stoneleigh's small sitting room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 62-** Stone fireplace on the east wall of Stoneleigh's central room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 63-** Stone fireplace on the southwest wall of Stoneleigh's central room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 64-** Decorative ceiling in Stoneleigh's central room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 65-** Marble fireplace in Stoneleigh's dining room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 66-** Decorative light fixture and wood paneling in Stoneleigh's central room:  
Photographed by author, March 18, 2019

**Figure 67-** Map of Stoneleigh:  
<https://organhistoricalsociety.org/stoneleigh/construction/files/stacks-image-fb58c6c.jpg>

**Figure 68-** Ladew Topiary Gardens:<https://pixabay.com/photos/ladew-topiary-gardens-maryland-2072584/>

**Figure 69-** Ladew Topiary Gardens:  
Photographed by Wendy C. Albert, April 17, 2017.

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## Index

Bill # 2468 59, 60, 71, 72, 103

Bodine, Samuel 10, 11, 12, 66, 80, 113

Conservation Easement 2, 45, 46, 47, 59, 60, 62, 64, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 100, 101, 103, 109, 110

Day, Frank Miles 1, 10, 25, 27, 66

Everett & Mead 10

Façade Easement 2, 49, 50, 51

Haas, John 14, 45, 46, 48, 113

Haas, Otto 12, 13, 14, 27, 85

King, Guy 10

Ladew Topiary Gardens 109, 110, 111

Lower Merion Conservancy 2, 3, 46, 63, 64, 66, 100

McCormick Farm 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74

Miller, Charles 9, 24, 27

Natural Lands 2, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 100, 107, 108, 113, 114

Olmsted Brothers 1, 11, 12, 26, 27, 32, 33, 53

Pentecost & Vitale 10, 25, 26, 27, 32, 33

Preservation Alliance For Greater Philadelphia 2, 49, 50, 100

Smith, Edmund 9, 10, 24, 77, 80, 113

Stoneleigh 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32, 33, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114

Wilson Brothers 9